



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

PROMOTING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN LATER LIFE THROUGH THE TOUCHSTONE PROGRAMME

A RESOURCE AND RESEARCH GUIDE

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Institute for
Lifecourse and Society



Irish Centre for Social Gerontology



Active
Ageing
Partnership

FOREWORD



Early in 2014, a partnership was formed between Age & Opportunity, Active Retirement Ireland and Third Age, under the name Active Ageing Partnership, to promote the ageing sector in Ireland. Among its early actions was a commitment to develop, design and implement a programme of action for greater civic engagement by older people within their own communities. This is the first report on the programme. It is an exemplar for other communities as to how older people can make their voice better heard in pursuing their own needs and strengthening their participation within their own communities.

The Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at NUI Galway, led by its Director, Professor Thomas Scharf, was selected as our academic partner, given the Centre's already well developed reputation and leadership role on research in the ageing sector. The programme was undertaken in association with Age Friendly Ireland and was funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies.

In the initial stage, it was decided that Galway, City and County, would be selected as the initial launch site for the development of the programme, with three other sites around the country (Meath, Waterford and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown) to follow at a later stage. The programmes were given the title 'Touchstone Projects'. These were time-specific engagements with older people of various backgrounds. In Galway, this took the form of an adult-learning programme involving fifty older people from different parts of the city and county. The programme provided opportunities to explore themes with older people such as how to deal with media, ageism, and the older person as a researcher. It also offered participants the chance to initiate their own small-scale projects. Above all, the older person was positioned at the centre of this experiential learning process. Each of the Active Ageing Partnership organisations made a significant contribution to the development of Touchstone and by participating in the programme played a role in its implementation.

The research presented in this document adds substantially to our knowledge of the factors that influence the motivation of older people to become civically engaged, and the supports they require to remain engaged. It identifies the challenges they sometimes face through being involved in their communities, and the enablers and barriers that impact on their civic engagement. Such insights can inform the development of future Touchstone programmes or of comparable civic engagement programmes aimed at older people.

The main outcomes of the research are that:

- The Touchstone course had a positive impact on the civic engagement of participating older people, providing knowledge and skills that could assist them in future engagement roles;
- The adult learning and community education approach adopted in the Touchstone programme motivated course participants not only to continue existing civic engagement activities but to take up new engagement roles;
- Newcomers to civic engagement were motivated to try out various activities through project work; participants who were more experienced in civic engagement activities felt motivated and re-energised to continue their engagement;
- Involving older people in the development of the Touchstone programme contributed to its success and created opportunities to secure the programme's future sustainability;

- The programme was enhanced by the involvement of experienced facilitators from the member organisations of the Active Ageing Partnership, who had extensive knowledge of working with groups of older adults in an empowering way;
- Further research is required to examine the medium and longer term effects of participation in the Touchstone programme on participants' civic engagement.

Towards the end of the programme, the research team, Thomas Scharf, Bernard McDonald and Ann Marie Atkins, organised a 'celebration' as a learning event. Those involved received a certificate for completing the programme and had an opportunity to present their ideas and reflect on how they had come to strengthen the voice of older people in their communities through increased participation in various activities in their own communities. Participants demonstrated how the application of these new insights brought about further engagement in their communities. The celebration event honoured the experience and commitment of these participants as they translated what they had learned through their lived experience and their shared and common interests into a meaningful action in response to their chosen project.

The publication of the Touchstone Guide and the findings of this action research offer further evidence that adult-learning models along with a collaborative spirit brings about a shift in understanding of the potential of our older population. It records the richness that is woven in community participation of older people acting together to add wisdom and be a catalyst for change where they live.

The report on the Galway project is the first and other reports will follow. We hope this body of research will influence and guide more active participation by older people in their communities.

Maurice O'Connell, MA

Coordinator
Active Ageing Partnership
24 February 2016

Acknowledgements

This Guide represents the outcome of a collaborative process that has benefited greatly from the support of a number of people and organisations. Their contributions have made the task of preparing the Guide much more straightforward for which we are grateful.

As an initiative of the Active Ageing Partnership, Touchstone has been shaped by the active involvement of the partners' chief executive officers, Áine Brady (Third Age), Maureen Kavanagh (Active Retirement Ireland) and Karen Smyth (Age & Opportunity). Hugh O'Connor, Age Friendly Ireland, has ensured that our work has connected easily with Ireland's burgeoning age-friendly programme. Maurice O'Connell, as Coordinator of the Active Ageing Partnership has provided the type of leadership to the Touchstone initiative that has maximised its chances of success and has ensured that each stage of our work has proceeded in collaborative fashion. With Liam Carey and Anne Dempsey (Third Age), Helen Campbell, Seán Dillon and Michael Foley (Age & Opportunity), and Sue Shaw (Active Retirement Ireland), each of these people has also played a role in Touchstone's National Advisory Group.

In Galway, our work has been made much easier by the encouragement and support of a Local Steering Group. At various times, this group benefited from the advice of Sarah Wetherald (Age Friendly Ireland), Declan Brassil and Vernice Murray (Galway City Partnership), Bernie Donnellan (Galway County Council, Galway Age Friendly programme), Joan Kavanagh and Evelyn Moran (Galway Older Persons Council), and Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha, Sile Halifax and Alison Jones (Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board). These colleagues have also agreed to continue to develop the Touchstone programme in Galway in the coming years for which we are grateful.

The Touchstone model is built on active collaboration. This has also been a feature of the facilitation of sessions on the Touchstone course and the ensuing project management activities. We are grateful to the facilitator of each Touchstone session (Helen Campbell, Anne Dempsey, Joan Kavanagh, Sue Shaw, and Mary Seale and Morgan Mee [West Training & Development Ltd]).

At the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, we have benefited from the supportive contributions of Christine De Lary, Sandra Hallinan and Kieran Walsh. Eden Weinflash, Margo Singer and Molly McHugh, students of Lehigh University, Pennsylvania, USA, provided invaluable research support during an exchange visit to NUI Galway in Spring 2015. The whole Irish Centre for Social Gerontology team, including research staff and doctoral students, was involved in ensuring the smooth running of the Touchstone Celebration Event. The Celebration Event also brought a wide number of organisations into the

Institute for Lifecourse and Society building to host stalls and to provide opportunities for participants to become more involved in community life: Active Ireland Retirement, Age & Opportunity, Age Friendly Galway Older Persons Council, Age Action West Care and Repair, Alone, Community Knowledge Initiative, COPE Galway, Dementia Friendly Galway, Galway Centre for Independent Living, Galway Citizens Information Centre, Galway City Partnership, Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board, Samaritans Galway, St. Vincent De Paul Croí na Gaillimhe, The Alzheimer's Society, The Carers Association Loughrea, Third Age, and Volunteer Galway.

Photos on pages 9 and 21 appear courtesy of Michael Maguire. The remaining photos were taken by members of the Research Team.

Finally, but by no means least, we wish to acknowledge the way in which participants on the Touchstone programme rose to the various challenges associated with being involved in a pilot civic engagement initiative. We could not have hoped for a more engaged and engaging group of participants. Not only did they turn up week after week to make the course sessions a pleasure to facilitate, but they often surpassed our expectations of them, developing a range of projects and seeing them through, participating in the research activities associated with Touchstone, and subsequently joining in a range of activities in the wider Galway region. Our hope is that many other people will be able to benefit from the insights generated from such active forms of civic engagement in the second half of life.

**Thomas Scharf, Bernard McDonald
and Ann Marie Atkins**

Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway
24 February 2016

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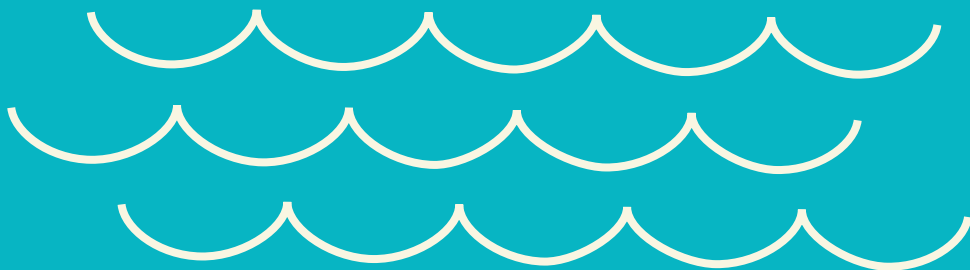
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1 INTRODUCTION



1.1 Introduction to the Guide

This Guide provides a detailed description of Touchstone, an adult-learning programme aimed at promoting the civic engagement of older people. It also presents the results of an in-depth case study of the piloting and development of the Touchstone programme in Galway. As such, the Guide supports the priorities related to the promotion and support of civic engagement outlined in recent public policy in Ireland, including in the Department of Health's (2013) *National Positive Ageing Strategy* and *Healthy Ireland*, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's (2012) *Putting People First*, and the Report of the Task Force on Active Citizenship (2007). It also supports the aim of Age Friendly Ireland to build the capacity of older people to play a meaningful role in the development of age-friendly communities.

This Guide was completed in February 2016. It has two parts. Part One provides a practical guide to the Touchstone programme. This incorporates an eight-session Touchstone course, including facilitators' notes and session handouts, designed to develop the knowledge and skills that underpin civic engagement, and follow-up action projects. The overall programme was piloted in Galway by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway, and has been revised to reflect the outcomes of the associated evaluation study. This part of the Guide outlines the principles which underpinned the development of the programme, and contains practical advice on matters such as how to engage with local stakeholders, recruit participants for the programme, and communicate information about the programme. It also contains detailed session plans for the programme facilitator, and associated handouts and other learning materials. Further, this section addresses issues related to the ongoing support of the action projects that participants begin to develop on the programme, and contains advice on how to sustain the longer-term involvement of older people in their communities.

Part Two presents a detailed account of the development and evaluation of the pilot Touchstone programme in Galway. It describes the various means by which local stakeholders were identified and encouraged to become involved prior to the development of the programme. It outlines the aim of the evaluation study, and the methodologies applied to assess participants' views of their involvement in the Touchstone programme. The findings outline the experience of programme participants in civic engagement activities prior to joining Touchstone, their views of the Touchstone programme, and the reported impact the programme has had on their plans for civic engagement in the immediate future. It reflects on the challenges involved in promoting the civic engagement of older people, and also highlights the many benefits that civic engagement can bring to the lives of older people and to their communities.

This Guide will be of interest to:

- older people with an interest in civic engagement;
- organisations in Ireland and other countries interested in promoting civic engagement among older people;
- experienced facilitators wishing to promote civic engagement;
- researchers interested in understanding and evaluating civic engagement initiatives;
- researchers interested in the participation of older people in creating age-friendly communities; and
- policy makers who wish to influence ageing issues.

1.2 Background to the Touchstone Project

Touchstone is a collaborative project which was developed by a consortium of organisations that play a significant role in the ageing sector in Ireland. This consortium is led by the three non-governmental organisations of the Active Ageing Partnership – Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Third Age – and also includes the Age Friendly Ireland programme. Touchstone is a time-bound project and is taking place in four different areas – Galway city and county, Waterford city, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, and Meath and Kildare. A different partner organisation of the Active Ageing Partnership consortium has taken the lead in each district. Galway city and county acted as the pilot area, with the pilot phase commencing in February 2015 and being completed in September 2015.

The Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway, in collaboration with Galway Age Friendly Older Persons Council and the Galway City and County Age Friendly programme, supported the development, roll-out and evaluation of the Touchstone project in Galway. The pilot project used the Active Ageing Partnership's collective resources as the basis for developing an education course and a process model focused on how best to foster the sustainable local involvement of a diverse range of older people in civic engagement activities.

Touchstone aims to enhance civic engagement by providing capacity building and educational support in local communities to enable older people to play a meaningful part in creating sustainable, age-friendly communities. The four objectives of the project are to:

- enhance civic engagement in later life for as diverse a population of older people as possible;
- develop, implement and evaluate an educational programme aimed at enhancing civic engagement;
- provide evidence concerning the impact of the programme on the civic engagement of older adults; and,
- support the sustainability of Age Friendly Communities by enhancing the capacity of older people to be engaged in civic activities.

Governance structures were established to oversee the development and evaluation of the project at both national and local levels. A National Advisory Group, chaired by Thomas Scharf of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, was established in February 2015. The chief executive officers (CEOs) of the partner organisations in the Active Ageing Partnership, the Active Ageing Partnership Co-ordinator, the CEO of Age Friendly Ireland, the lead person for each Touchstone district, and members of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology research team sat on the National Advisory Group. This group ensured that Touchstone was aligned with developments on Ireland's national Age Friendly City and County programme, and acted as the reporting body for the

progress of the project in the various areas. Through the meetings of the National Advisory Group, the learning from the pilot project continuously informed the approach adopted in the other three Touchstone areas. A Local Steering Group was also established in Galway to oversee the development of the pilot programme (see Part Two).

As Principal Investigator, Thomas Scharf has been responsible for the evaluation of the pilot programme. To support him, a research team, consisting of a research associate and a research assistant, was recruited in February and March 2015. In collaboration with members of the Active Ageing Partnership, the content of the Galway Touchstone programme was developed early in 2015. Much of the content was based on modules of programmes and courses that had already been developed by the Active Ageing Partnership partner organisations. Additional learning material was developed by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology research team. The partner organisations of the Active Ageing Partnership provided facilitators for many of the programme sessions, and members of the research team provided continuity across the programme's various sessions.

Two Touchstone courses ran over a six-week period from April to July 2015, with one two-hour session per week for two separate groups of participants. This was followed by an action project component over the summer months when participants received ongoing support to develop and implement action projects they had identified during the course. A Celebration Event for all 'graduates' of the programme was held in Galway in September 2015, and an extensive civic engagement 'Fair' was organised where programme participants were informed of additional civic engagement opportunities in the Galway area. The national launch of the Touchstone project coincided with the Celebration Event.

The pilot Touchstone programme applied an adult-learning and community education approach, and was flexible to accommodate the interests and needs of participants. The programme was delivered in the Institute for Lifecourse and Society building on the NUI Galway campus.

1.3 Introduction to Civic Engagement

1.3.1 Defining Civic Engagement

There is growing interest in the study of civic engagement. Some of this is driven, in Europe in particular, by concerns about apparently declining levels of civic engagement, low electoral turnouts and what is perceived to be a growing disenchantment and cynicism about politics and politicians. Indeed this concern is not restricted to Europe. Putnam (2000), perhaps the best-known contributor to this debate, argued in *Bowling Alone* that declining levels of civic engagement were an indicator of a serious erosion of democracy. Alongside a focus on the political sphere, interest has also been driven by increasing evidence that civic engagement, and volunteerism in particular, can lead to positive health and wellbeing outcomes in later life. This has led to research which aims to understand civic engagement better in order to promote its benefits among older people. However, some research adopts a more critical stance, cautioning about the ways in which we frame and define the concept of civic engagement, and warning about some of the possible negative consequences this can have for older people.

On the face of it, defining civic engagement should be a relatively easy task. However, there is a growing literature regarding the confusion that exists about the precise meaning of the term, the synonymous use of terms like 'engagement' and 'participation', and a general drift and imprecision in the use of various related but different concepts. This section reviews some of the definitions and typologies that have been developed and also explores some of the

consequences that flow from the definitions in use. This has been particularly important in the context of Touchstone to ensure that the project is based on a clear understanding of what it means to promote civic engagement.

Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) review the current European literature on civic and political engagement. They outline the different forms that civic and political engagement can take, and review the factors that influence different patterns of engagement and participation. Initially, they draw a conceptual distinction between political and civic participation. For them, political participation refers to activities which aim to influence governance at local, national or supranational levels, including activity aimed at influencing the development of policy, and activity that attempts to influence the selection of political representatives. By contrast, civic participation refers to voluntary activity, whether taken on an individual or a group basis, that aims to help others and improve the life of the community. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) also draw a conceptual distinction between engagement and participation. While the term participation is used to refer to behaviours and activity, engagement is presented as a psychological construct which relates to having an interest in or paying attention to, or having beliefs and attitudes about either political or civic matters. Using these understandings of engagement and participation, they outline the different forms of participation and engagement that are evident in the countries they studied (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1: Examples of Forms of Participation and Engagement

Conventional Political Participation	Non-conventional Political Participation	Civic Participation	Political and Civic Engagement
Voting	Going on protest marches or demonstrations	Informally assisting the well-being of others in the community	Paying attention to the news media (newspapers, magazines, television, radio, Internet)
Being a member of a political party	Signing petitions	Undertaking organised voluntary work	Following political or civic affairs
Running for political election	Writing letters or emails or making phone calls with a political content to the media	Community problem solving through community organisations/membership of community organisations/ attending meetings of these organisations/expressing one's point of view at these meetings	Having political or civic knowledge or beliefs
Working on election campaigns	Using social networking sites on the Internet to join or like groups which have a political focus	Participating in the activities of these organisations/holding an office in these Organizations	Understanding political or civic institutions
Donating to political parties	Wearing or displaying a symbol or sign representing support for a political cause	Membership of other non-political organisations (e.g. religious institutions, sports clubs, etc.)/ attending meetings of these organisations/expressing one's point of view at these meetings	Understanding political or civic values
	Distributing leaflets which express support for a political cause	School-based community service	Holding opinions about, and attitudes towards, political or civic matters
	Fundraising events for a political cause	Fundraising activities for good causes	Having feelings about political or civic matters
	Membership of political lobbying and campaigning organisations	Consumer activism: boycotting and preferential buying	

(Based on Barrett and Brunton-Smith, 2014)

Patterns of engagement and participation are influenced by a complex range of factors. Macro-contextual factors, such as design features of the electoral system or cultural and historical characteristics specific to individual countries, are important. So too are demographic factors, such as socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender. A diverse range of social factors, including family background, education, the peer group, the workplace and the mass media, have also been identified as influencing patterns of engagement and participation. In addition to these factors, a range of psychological factors at individual level can influence patterns of engagement and participation. These include cognitive and emotional elements and specific types of individual efficacy. Essentially, for Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014), while political participation is activity which influences the formation and implementation of public policy, civic participation is activity which aims to improve and effect change in the local community. Political and civic engagement refers to the cognitive, emotional and psychological factors which underpin these activities.

Ekman and Amna (2012) also note the confusion that has surrounded the concepts of civic engagement and political participation. They argue that civic engagement in particular, as popularised by Putnam (2000), has been used to cover everything from voting to fundraising for charity, or being actively involved in a sport to organising marches and demonstrations. In reviewing previous definitions and operationalisations of the two concepts, Ekman and Amna (2012) have developed a typology which captures the complex dimensions of both concepts. They make what they view as being a critical distinction between manifest political participation, including formal political participation and extra-parliamentary activities, and latent or indirect forms of political participation. This latter category recognises that people engage in their communities outside of the formal or informal political sphere. They conceptualise civic engagement as one form of latent political participation. They also distinguish between forms of participation which can be engaged in by an individual and those engaged in on a collective basis (Figure 1.2).

In an expansion of the typology presented in Figure

Figure 1.2: Latent and Manifest Political Participation

Latent Political Participation (Civil Participation)		Manifest Political Participation		
Social Involvement (attention)	Civic Engagement (action)	Formal political participation	Activism (extra-parliamentary participation) – legal or illegal	
Individual Forms				
Personal interest in politics and societal issues Paying attention to political and societal issues	Activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues	Electoral participation and contact activities	Legal Extra-parliamentary forms of participation: to make one's voice heard or to make a difference by individual means (e.g. signing petitions)	Illegal Politically motivated unlawful acts committed on an individual basis
Collective Forms				
A sense of belonging to a group with a distinct political profile or agenda; life-style related politics (e.g. identity, clothes, music, food, values)	Voluntary work in the local community, for charity, or to help others (outside the own family and circle of friends)	Organised political participation: membership in political parties, trade unions.	Loosely organised forms or network-based political participation: e.g. new social movements, demonstrations, protests	Illegal and violent activities and protests

(Based on Ekman and Amna, 2012)

1.2, Ekman and Amna (2012) also recognise that some people are not interested in, or indeed can be very disillusioned with, formal politics and civic affairs, and may choose not to become engaged at all.

Martinson and Minkler (2006) and Minkler and Holstein (2008) critique the concept of civic engagement as used in the United States. Whilst these authors do not develop an elaborate typology of civic engagement, they distinguish between broad and narrow uses of the term. In the broader usage, civic engagement includes 'political participation' and 'community involvement'. Political participation parallels what Ekman and Amna (2012) refer to as manifest political participation, including political activism by an individual or group of individuals. Community involvement represents a more limited form of civil participation, as described in Ekman and Amna's (2012) typology, and is often restricted to refer to volunteering. Minkler and her associates criticise the fact that civic engagement is frequently promoted in the United States in the narrower sense of involvement in the life of one's

community, mainly through volunteering. They argue that operationalising civic engagement mainly as volunteering in the public or private sector can leave other forms of engagement invisible and de-valued, including more radical forms of political activism. In tracing this development, Minkler and her associates are wary of the close links between ideas around engagement and the emerging active and productive ageing agendas, elements of which seem to necessitate older people being 'productive' and 'active' in order for them to be of value. They are concerned about the consequences of this for many older people who may either choose not to be civically engaged in this way in their community, or who indeed may be unable to be so engaged. Finally, Minkler and her associates argue that we need to be cautious about adopting this narrower understanding of civic engagement as volunteering, as this can be used to fill gaps in social and community services which, in turn, may be seen as releasing government from a responsibility to provide for basic human needs (Martinson and Minkler, 2006; Minkler and Holstein, 2008).

1.3.2 Benefits of Civic Engagement

Studies of civic engagement have increasingly found that older adults benefit greatly from engaging with their communities through activities such as volunteering, intergenerational mentoring and education, and social, political and community activism. The research evidence is compelling and indicates benefits for individuals which include gains in emotional and physical well-being, lower mortality, and increased cognitive activity (Dabelko-Schoeny et al., 2010). There is a growing body of evidence on volunteerism in particular which, aside from the benefits outlined above, also documents additional individual benefits, such as better skill and knowledge development, maintenance of a sense of purpose in life, lower levels of depression, reduced pain, and higher levels of life satisfaction. Benefits are not confined to individuals, but are also conferred on their families and the wider community. In one study, volunteers reported that older adults' family members were less concerned about them, and that the family gained knowledge about information and resources through their volunteering activity. In the same study, most volunteers reported that communities were enhanced because the individuals receiving the services of the volunteer programme were better off as a result. Benefits extended to higher levels of awareness about social issues among members of their community, and higher levels of intergenerational understanding (Hong and Morrow-Howell, 2013).

The benefits associated with civic engagement can vary according to characteristics of the individual involved, aspects of the volunteering activity itself, and the type of civic engagement in which an individual partakes. Volunteers with fewer personal and social resources experience more positive outcomes, and older volunteers who have higher levels of religious and social involvement perceive more benefits from volunteering. There is currently mixed evidence regarding the relationship between ethnicity or gender and perceived benefits, but being married and being employed appear to be associated with positive outcomes of volunteering. Lower-income and lower-educated volunteers report more benefit, although paradoxically, civic engagement participation rates vary strongly with measures of socio-economic status, which means lower socio-economic groups are under-represented in volunteering roles (Hudson, 2008). However, evidence suggests that aspects of the volunteer experience, like the amount of involvement, the adequacy of training and ongoing support, and the provision of stipends, are more important than individual characteristics in understanding who benefits from volunteering. Other important aspects of the volunteering programme which affect perceived outcomes include flexibility in assignment and scheduling in the programme, and the programme's recognition of volunteer effort (Morrow-Howell et al.,

2009).

There is also emerging evidence that there is variation in benefits depending on the type of community engagement involved. Gilster (2012) compared volunteerism with neighbourhood-focused activism. As noted previously, civic engagement research often distinguishes between activism which is primarily focused on political and social change, and volunteerism which is oriented towards providing a service to individuals. In general, activists tend to view the social structure as a target of intervention, whereas volunteers view it as a framework within which to work. Gilster's (2012) research suggests that activism leads to different benefits than volunteerism. Activists have higher neighbourhood and personal mastery than those who volunteer. Community activism is also associated with an increased likelihood of contact with local officials and enhanced social ties in the neighbourhood.

1.3.3 Civic Engagement and Touchstone

In light of the range of meanings attached to the term civic engagement, the benefits which accrue, and in keeping with the values which underpin the work of Touchstone's sponsor organisations, a broad understanding of civic engagement has been operationalised in developing and evaluating the programme.

This definition encompasses a wide spectrum of individual and collective activities to include:

- being interested in, and attentive to, political and civic affairs;
- civic participation, including volunteering in the local community; and,
- political participation, including engagement with the formal political system and other forms of community and political activism.

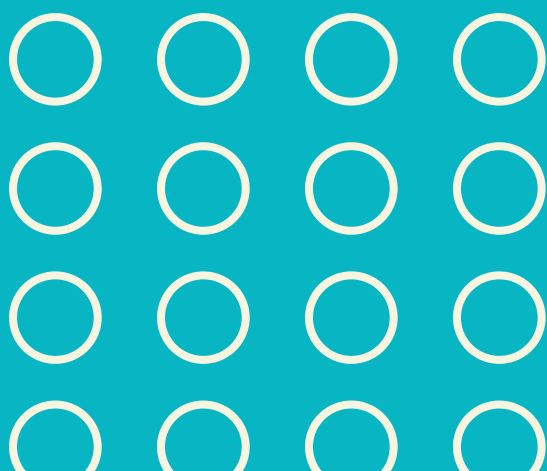
In applying this definition, Touchstone, whilst promoting greater civic engagement, recognises the barriers to becoming civically engaged that are present for some older people, and aims to support older people to overcome these barriers where possible. It also recognises that some people choose not to become more civically engaged for a variety of legitimate reasons.

PART ONE

**DEVELOPING
AND DELIVERING
A TOUCHSTONE
PROGRAMME**



2 PRE-PROGRAMME PLANNING



2.1 Principles Underpinning the Touchstone Programme

This section presents a brief summary of the major developments in adult-learning theory and community education that underpin the approach adopted on the Touchstone programme.

2.1.1 Adult-learning Principles

In his seminal work on adult-learning theory, Knowles (1973) reported that adult learners have a number of major characteristics which include:

- control of their learning;
- valuing the immediate utility of their learning;
- a focus on issues that concern them;
- the desire to test their learning as they go;
- an ability to anticipate how they will use their learning;
- the expectation of performance improvement;
- a capacity to maximise available resources;
- the requirement of a collaborative, respectful, mutual and informal climate; and
- a reliance on information that is appropriate and developmentally placed.

In further work, Knowles (1980, 1992) and Knowles et al. (2005) stressed that adults are autonomous learners who are goal oriented, who require learning to be relevant, and are practical people who have gained knowledge through their past life experiences. The major motivating factors for adult learners are success, volition, value and enjoyment. Knowles' theory, which he termed andragogy, has been the major influence on adult-learning practice in the last 40 years.

However, adult-learning theory, as developed by Knowles, has not been without its critics. One criticism is that it over-emphasises the individual and individual agency, and fails to place sufficient emphasis on the social context of adult learning, and how this can enable or hinder learning. Because of this and other shortcomings, Merriam (2001) argued that no single adult-learning theory explains how adults learn, and stressed the need to recognise the place of self-directed learning as a second pillar of adult-learning theory. She describes the three core goals of self-directed learning as promoting the learner's capacity to be self-directed, supporting critical reflection, and promoting emancipatory learning and social action. The latter is important as it positions adult learning in a way that allows it to promote social and political action as well as individual learning.

Finn (2011), in a review of the development of adult-learning theory, identified the key assumptions that need to be considered when programmes and courses are being developed for adult learners. These assumptions are that adult learners: are self-directed; draw from life experiences; are problem-centred rather than subject-centred; are internally motivated to learn; and, need to know why they need to learn what they are learning. In addition, adult learners' social roles help to determine their

readiness to learn (p.37).

Zepeda et al. (2014), in a wide-ranging review of adult-learning theories, which included andragogy and self-directed learning theory, identified five major characteristics of adult learning which the various theories hold in common. These are similar to those identified by Finn (2011) and described above. The characteristics are that adult learning is: self-directed; motivational for the learner; problem-centred; relevancy oriented; and, goal-oriented.

The Touchstone programme has been developed to reflect many of these basic assumptions and characteristics. It recognises that participants are self-directed and will choose to engage with whatever elements of the programme they are particularly interested in. It encourages participant-led discussion and identification of 'problems' related to ageing and civic engagement. It is facilitated in a way which respects and mobilises the past experiences of participants. It allows for 'problems' related to civic engagement to be reflected on in both a personal and a collaborative context. It develops relevant skills and supports action project work which can address these 'problems'. Whilst it promotes individual learning and critical reflection, where participants so wish, it can also lead to social and political action.

2.1.2 Community Education Approaches

The development of the Touchstone programme was also influenced by approaches adopted in community education. Tett et al. (2003) describe the main approaches to community education, each of which has a different model of society and community, and hence different premises and strategies underpinning practice. The three main approaches can be broadly characterised as 'universal', 'reformist' and 'radical'. Martin (1987), who originally devised this classification, described the essentials of each approach. The universal model assumes that community has shared values and a working consensus, with a basic harmony of interests. The role of community education in this model is to provide non-selective education to all ages and groups. The reformist model assumes a plurality of interests with competition between groups for resources. Under this model, community education makes selective interventions to support disadvantaged people and socially excluded groups and geographic areas. Under the radical model, there is an assumption that interests are in conflict because existing structures create inequality and powerlessness. In this model, community education develops a political education and social action programme with local people which focuses on specific issues and concerns in the community. All three models seek to improve social conditions, and believe that education should grow out of the

experiences of participants and the social interests that are generated within communities. In practice, most community education has adopted the reformist model with a focus on combating disadvantage. This model is often criticised for placing too much emphasis on developing the capacity of the individual rather than addressing the structural causes which lie behind community problems. However Ng and Madyaningrum (2014) have demonstrated that even this model can be used to develop community capacity and lead to 'small wins' which in themselves can develop readiness for more radical and long-term community change.

The Touchstone programme reflects elements of all three approaches. It can be used with participants who have been recruited openly, or with a group where selection criteria are used to reflect social or economic difference, where this is deemed to be important. Whilst the Touchstone programme does focus on the individual participant, it also promotes a group approach to addressing social issues relevant to older people. These issues are identified by programme participants themselves. The project-work element, for participants who wish to address problems, recognises that small-scale initiatives have the potential to make a difference, particularly in the way in which they provide experience of early success and achievement. The Touchstone programme can also be used in situations where a more radical approach is required, as it has elements which develop skills relevant to supporting political and social action.

2.2 Local Stakeholder Involvement

To ensure the effective planning and roll-out of a Touchstone programme, it is beneficial to mobilise at the planning stage the support of local stakeholders who have an interest in promoting the civic engagement of ageing adults. The composition of the stakeholder group is likely to vary from one area to another, but it is likely to include the relevant Education and Training Board, local community development organisations such as partnership companies, third-level institutions with an interest in community development and adult learning, relevant community and voluntary organisations, and local representatives of non-governmental organisations with an interest in promoting civic engagement (e.g. Age & Opportunity, Active Retirement Ireland, and Third Age). It is also important to engage older people as stakeholders. This can occur, for example, through the local Older People's Council and/or through the Age Friendly City or County programme led by the local authority. In choosing the relevant stakeholders, consideration should be given to stakeholders' knowledge of the local area, their ability to bring resources to the table, and their proven commitment to promoting the civic engagement of older people.

One way of mobilising and focusing the support of local stakeholders is to establish a steering group for the programme. It is important that such a group should have a clear understanding of its purpose, and be time-limited to the duration of the programme. At least some members of a steering group should have the authority to make decisions regarding the programme's resourcing. When well chaired, such a group can:

- oversee the roll-out of the programme, including securing the main resources required (e.g. the cost of facilitation and coordination for the programme, venue and hospitality costs);
- advise on core issues, such as recruitment of participants, the level of support needed for participants before and during the programme, effective communications with participants;
- promote civic engagement of older people and communicate progress on the programme back to their relevant constituencies;
- identify opportunities for participants to become more engaged in the life of their communities following their participation in the programme; and
- secure the ongoing sustainability of the Touchstone programme in the area.

It may not always be viable to establish a steering group. Where this is so, it is important that the organisation sponsoring the programme ensures that it has established a broad coalition of support for the Touchstone programme, similar to that represented on a steering group, in order to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

Ensuring the longer-term sustainability of a Touchstone programme can become a key task for the local steering group, ensuring that increasing numbers of people have access to the civic engagement opportunities that arise from participation in the programme. With appropriate stakeholders involved in the group, it can be possible to develop a collaborative approach that embeds Touchstone within the local community. This typically involves sharing of knowledge and resources. For example, while some stakeholders might have access to potential programme participants through their community development activities, others may be able to provide access to funding to support the roll-out of the programme. Knowledgeable stakeholders will also be able to ensure that the Touchstone programme can be embedded in relevant local strategies (e.g. local economic and community plans, age-friendly strategies, adult learning plans and the like), thereby raising awareness of the programme and increasing the likelihood that the necessary resources can be secured to make the programme sustainable.

2.3 Recruiting Participants

There is no ideal number of participants for a civic engagement programme such as Touchstone. If too many people are recruited, individual participants may find it difficult to engage in group discussions or to interact with facilitators. If too few people are recruited, participants may not be able to learn as much from others' experience of civic engagement. The Touchstone programme is likely to work best with 15-25 participants.

Identifying the preferred characteristics of programme participants will shape the recruitment strategy that is used and also to allocate places. If the aim is to recruit people who are not already well engaged in their communities, it might be advisable to base recruitment on some form of a screening process. Screening can be done either informally over the phone or by using a more formal application form for the programme. Questions to include when screening would elicit potential participants' age, gender, educational level, place of residence, group memberships, frequency of volunteering, and any special needs that they might have. Establishing the prime factors which motivate participants to attend may also be worthwhile. Based on the information collected, screening can be used to prioritise the participation of those who are judged likely to benefit most from the Touchstone programme. Screening also allows the programme coordinator to ensure a mix of participants that better reflects the heterogeneity of an ageing population (in terms, for example, of age, gender, place of residence).

At this stage, steps can also be taken to ensure that the programme is as inclusive as possible. With this in mind, places may need to be reserved for people belonging to groups which are often under-represented in adult-learning programmes. This would include reserving places for people with a disability, for family carers, or for people with a low level of formal education. Screening can also be helpful in identifying any factors which may help participants to access the programme (for example, transport needs or needs concerning the accessibility of the venue to be used for the programme).

Recruitment to the programme may involve preparing a flyer with essential programme information, such as the dates of sessions, the programme's duration, venue location, and cost (if any) (see Appendix 1). Such a flyer should use everyday language and be written in an accessible format (e.g. in terms of font size and colour). The flyer should provide information about how potential participants can register for the programme and give relevant contact details (name, phone number, email address). Recruiting by phone has the advantage of establishing an immediate rapport with potential programme participants, allowing participants to pose a range of questions about the programme. However, this can also be a time-consuming process. Recruiting via electronic means might save time, but might mean that it takes longer to build a rapport with potential participants and might lead to individuals' learning or access needs being overlooked.

It is useful to identify a range of channels through which to recruit participants, bearing in mind that such decisions are influenced by the potential target audience. Local broadcast and print media can be helpful in publicising the programme. Given that such media will target different areas of the local

area in which recruitment is to occur, it might be useful to generate a list of relevant radio stations and newspapers to be approached.

Stakeholder organisations may also be able to offer assistance and provide advice on the best way to recruit from particular groups. They may also reproduce information on their websites and in their newsletters. Potential recruitment sources for the Touchstone programme might include: Age-friendly programmes, in particular the Older Persons Councils, typically led by county or city councils; age-sector non-governmental organisations; local active retirement associations; other networks of older people; University of the Third Age groups; Men's Shed groups; local education and training boards; family resource centres; community development workers; Centres for Independent Living; and religious organisations and churches.

Some stakeholder organisations may also be willing to engage in forms of pre-programme planning and preparation for groups traditionally under-represented in adult-learning programmes. For example, if it becomes evident that people living in a particular geographic area are not participating in the programme, developing a 'taster' workshop in which some of the key themes to be explored in the Touchstone programme are presented in an accessible way to local groups of older people can help to overcome any apprehensions that may be held about taking part in such a programme. Such workshops can be facilitated by community development workers or by age-sector organisations working in collaboration with community partners.

Good recruitment always takes time. Allow at least five weeks before the commencement of the Touchstone programme to recruit participants. There are advantages in limiting the time period between initiating recruitment and allocating places, since a long waiting period may demotivate potential participants. It may also be useful to consider developing a plan of action in the case of recruiting too many or too few participants. In the case of the former, a regret email/letter which states the reasons for someone not securing a place of the programme and outlines potential alternative opportunities to become more civically engaged might be appreciated. In the case of the latter, it might be necessary to encourage registered programme participants to recruit a friend or neighbour, to identify and target other recruitment sources or to widen participation criteria.

During the recruitment process, it makes sense to keep track of all those who register an interest in participating in such programmes. Establishing a 'Touchstone network' could provide a resource pool from which to recruit future programme participants. Keeping accurate records also offers an indication of demand for the programme which may have implications for securing necessary programme

funding to extend the Touchstone programme.

Reflecting the adult-learning approach, programme facilitators/organisers should be as welcoming to participants as possible in all communications. Establishing a good rapport encourages open communication and is likely to be beneficial as the programme progresses (for example, if a participant is absent from a session, it is possible to follow up with a short phone call).

2.4 Communications and Ongoing Support for Participants

Communications and ongoing support for participants is important at all stages of rollout of the Touchstone programme. This is particularly so for 'hard-to-reach' participants who may not be civically engaged or socially involved in their community, and for participants who may not have had a positive experience of the education system previously. The programme coordinator should be aware of the barriers that are present for some participants, and be prepared to take measures, even at recruitment stage, to assist participants to overcome them. Where possible, at the recruitment stage it may be useful to build on any existing positive relationships potential participants might have with staff in community groups, and with workers in organisations involved in community development activities.

It may be more appropriate for some potential applicants to access a personal development course where the focus is on building self-confidence and self-esteem before participating in a Touchstone programme. Care should be taken to ensure that all information about the Touchstone programme is accessible, uses plain language, and takes into account the possibility that some potential participants may have literacy problems. It should also take cognisance of the fact that some older people may not have well-developed IT skills, and may prefer alternative channels of communications to email.

Once the programme has commenced, participants should have a point of contact, preferably the lead facilitator, with whom they can discuss any difficulties they may be experiencing on the programme. Such support should be provided in an empathic and timely manner, leading where possible to solutions. Difficulties that may emerge are those that can arise for any age group, and include caring responsibilities, personal illness, illness of a family member, transport problems, and a range of other issues which can affect a person's ability to remain committed to the programme. Appropriate support in dealing with many of these issues can enable participants to complete the programme successfully. In order to be aware of how participants are experiencing the programme, it is advisable for the facilitator to check in with individuals and with the full group on an ongoing basis as the programme proceeds. This approach can ensure that any difficulties are identified early and can be dealt with before they escalate. It is also good practice to maintain a register of attendance which can give an early indication of any emerging problems.

During the project work stage the lead facilitator should be available to provide support directly to, or access support for, the various projects. The facilitator can also have a 'bird's-eye' view of the projects as they develop and may be able to link up various projects, as opportunities for knowledge- and skill-sharing arise. The facilitator can keep emerging action projects updated regarding overall project developments and progress, and thus motivate participants to complete their work. Healthy competition between projects can be a good thing! At this stage, and following the Celebration Event, participants can be kept informed of events or other training opportunities that are relevant within the context of a broad understanding of civic engagement. This will provide Touchstone participants with the opportunity to network, learn new skills, and maintain their motivation to make their communities more age-friendly.



2.5 Venue and Hospitality Issues

The ideal venue for the Touchstone programme would be well serviced by public transport and accessible for participants with disabling conditions. All participants will require precise directions to the venue prior to commencement of the programme. Participants should also be informed about parking space at the venue and the availability of disabled parking bays. Directions to the room in which the programme sessions will take place and to toilets should be well sign-posted inside the venue.

Participants should receive relevant contact details, including the mobile phone number of the programme facilitator ahead of the first course session. Some participants may be apprehensive about practical arrangements concerning the programme, including locating the venue, and may wish to seek reassurance ahead of their arrival. Others may arrive early on the day of the course. If refreshments are not being provided on arrival and if there is no café or vending machine at the venue, it may be helpful in advance to point participants towards alternative local catering facilities. If refreshments are being provided, it will be necessary to identify any special dietary needs that participants might have. Access to fresh drinking water should be offered during each course session.

Participants' special needs are likely to have been identified during the recruitment phase. It is important to respond to such needs in an individual manner based on a discussion with those who indicate a need. People with physical or sensory disabilities may require additional supports or assistance in accessing the venue and its facilities, or in engaging with the programme and tasks to be performed during the sessions. All participants should be made familiar with the procedures to be followed in the venue in the event of an emergency situation, such as a fire. The facilitator should be familiar with any particular requirements associated with the venue and should also carry with them the contact numbers of trained first aiders within the venue.

Whenever possible, it is advisable to use the same room for each session. This makes it possible to display materials created during sessions, encouraging participants to feel at ease and serving as a visual cue to support their learning. If the programme is being documented, it will be necessary to request permission to take photos during sessions and to agree with programme participants in advance on the use and storage of any images. It can be helpful to display photos in the room where the sessions take place to alleviate any concerns that participants might have about the use of photos. Any materials generated during the programme should be stored in a safe and secure location.

There is no ideal room setting for adult-learning programmes such as Touchstone. If the aim is to facilitate small-group discussion, then aiming to have 6-8 people sitting at tables arranged in a café style represents a good rule of thumb. Having access to tables makes it easier for participants to perform programme-related tasks, as well as providing both physical support and comfort. Interaction is likely to be enhanced if facilitators and participants wear name tags each week, but especially during the initial weekly sessions. Participants should also be encouraged to swap tables from week to week in order to promote group cohesion and to ensure that learning opportunities are maximised across the group.



If resources permit, offering participants lunch or refreshments at the end of weekly sessions can help to build rapport within the group and to lay a strong foundation for any joint project activities that may follow. If such resources are not available, it might still be worthwhile pointing participants to local catering facilities where they can continue any unfinished conversations. Such occasions can provide important opportunities for information sharing and informal networking. It is also possible to use scheduled breaks to check in with participants about their progress on the programme and to anticipate any issues that might emerge.

2.6 Facilitation

The Touchstone programme has been designed to be delivered by facilitators with extensive knowledge and experience of working in an educational context with adults. As outlined above in relation to the principles underpinning the programme (Section 2.1), the way in which the programme has been designed recognises that older adults are self-directed learners, who expect participant-led discussion and opportunities to identify themselves the issues related to ageing and civic engagement. The programme design respects and mobilises the past experiences of participants, and develops the knowledge and skills by which they can address these issues. Whilst it encourages individual learning and critical reflection, it can also lead to collective social and political action.

The facilitator will ideally have a broad understanding of their role on the Touchstone programme, and will appreciate the powerful impact they can have on the lives of participants. Prendiville (2004) describes group facilitation as a '... tool for participation, inclusion and positive social change (which can be used) to support the development of a more equal and just society' (p.3). She defines facilitation as a way of working with people which encourages participation and decision making. Further, she points out that facilitation has an equal emphasis on achieving the task and on the process involved in that achievement. She also stresses that facilitation is a values-driven activity, which has at its core the principles of equality, inclusion, participation and affirmation. In this broadest sense, the facilitator on the Touchstone programme is an agent of change with regard to civic engagement; someone who has a serious and sometimes challenging role in enabling individuals, and indeed full groups, to realise the potential they have to contribute to their communities.

The weekly session plans have an easy-to-follow structure. The focus is on facilitation and not on mastery of the content areas covered. However, facilitators with extensive experience of working with older adults on particular issues may be available for individual sessions by contacting the following Active Ageing Partnership partner organisations:

- Age & Opportunity (www.ageandopportunity.ie);
- Active Retirement Ireland (www.activeirl.ie); and
- Third Age (www.thirdageireland.ie).

Where external facilitators are being used for individual sessions, in order to ensure continuity of approach and the coherence of the overall programme, it is advisable that a 'lead' facilitator be appointed who has overall responsibility for the programme and is in attendance at each session.

2.7 Budget

Having access to appropriate resources will raise the likelihood that the Touchstone programme can be delivered in the way described in this Guide and achieve its desired outcomes. An indicative budget for an eight-week Touchstone course and any resulting action project activities is presented in Figure 2.1.

The assumption is that programme participants do not pay a fee to engage in the programme. The indicative budget includes funding to meet the costs of a programme facilitator, the travel costs for potential guest speakers who might contribute to the taught sessions, hospitality costs, equipment costs, and costs such as photocopying, printing or producing recruitment materials. In practice, the budget for each Touchstone programme is likely to vary based on the nature of weekly sessions and the availability of local resources.

Figure 2.1:
Indicative Budget for an 8-week Touchstone course and related project activities

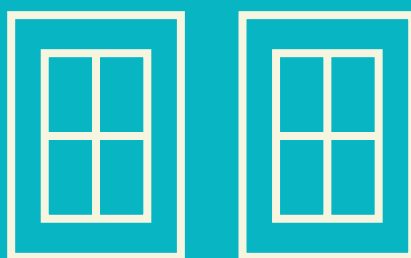
Budget heading	Total (in Euro)
Labour (Engaging facilitator for 8x3-hour sessions @ €40/hour; 10 hours of planning and reporting by facilitator and facilitator support to steering group @ €40/hour)	1,360
Travel (Guest speakers x 6)	300
Hospitality (Refreshments for programme participants, facilitator, guest speakers etc.; project activities; Celebration Event)	2,000
Equipment (Flip chart pads, marker pens, post-it notes, paper, name badges etc.)	200
Other (Photocopying, printing, recruitment etc.)	600
Total cost	4,460

2.8 Evaluation

When developing and delivering a Touchstone programme, it is useful to consider at an early stage whether some form of programme evaluation is to be undertaken. Providing evidence of what works may be helpful if further funding is to be secured to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

Having access to information about the experiences of programme participants might also provide a basis for revising the Touchstone programme so that it better meets its aim to enhancing ageing adults' civic engagement. Equally important is having evidence of what does not work. Underpinning the adult-learning approach is the need for reflection on the part of programme participants and facilitators. If an evaluation is to be undertaken, it might be useful to consider collecting information from participants both before and after completion of the programme. The Appendices to this Guide include some tools that can be used for this purpose in the form of questionnaires and a focus group guide. Producing a short report that summarises the programme evaluation can make an important contribution to the emerging knowledge base about civic engagement in later life. Local stakeholder organisations should be encouraged to publish evaluation reports on their websites to ensure that they are as widely accessible as is possible.

3 OUTLINE OF TOUCHSTONE PROGRAMME AND WEEKLY SESSIONS



3.1 Overview of the Touchstone Programme

Figure 3.1 presents a broad overview of the Touchstone programme, showing the topic and content and learning objectives associated with the two main features of the programme – the eight weekly sessions, and the action projects and celebration event.

Figure 3.1: Overview of Touchstone Programme

	Topic and Content	Learning Objectives
Session 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Course outline • Civic engagement (CE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know fellow participants • Understand programme outline • Explore personal experience and understanding of CE • Reflect on what participants would like to learn on programme
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic change • Ageism and age discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand population ageing • Explore how older people are perceived by society and how age discrimination can be challenged
Session 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Societal issues and how they impact on older people • Bringing about change • Ageing policies and practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore wider societal issues and how they impact on older people • Develop critical personal awareness skills • Understand how key policies on ageing influence participants' lives • Be motivated to bring about change
Session 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal involvement in CE activities • Different types of CE • Opportunities in Touchstone programme area and benefits of being involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on what knowledge and skills participants can bring to CE • Become aware of CE opportunities available and how participants may influence change • Reflect on CE activities participants might be interested in
Session 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to project planning • Possible project areas of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to plan, monitor and assess a project • Identify project areas for development and begin basic project planning
Session 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to research skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with basic research methods • Identify which research skills can be used on projects • Explore ethical issues that may arise in a research project

	Topic and Content	Learning Objectives
Session 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using media and formal political system to support CE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn to engage with media to promote a project Learn how to engage with local and national politicians to influence change
Session 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical support arrangements for CE projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make practical arrangements regarding project development and support
Action Project (with ongoing support over 8-week period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing support provided to individual projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop CE understanding and skills by taking action on an issue of choice in local community, on an individual or collective basis Develop a project report for presentation to peers at Celebration Event
Celebration Event and Civic Engagement 'Fair'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of action projects and reflection on learning from programme Presentation of certificates Future CE opportunities in Touchstone area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present projects to peers and reflect on learning from course and projects Learn about current and future CE opportunities in Touchstone area

3.2 Weekly Sessions

3.2.1 Session One: Introduction

Topic and Content:

Introductions; programme outline; learning contract; Civic Engagement (CE) workshop

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Get to know fellow participants
- Become familiar with the programme outline
- Reflect on what they would like to learn on the programme
- Explore their personal experience and understandings of CE

Materials required

Handout – Outline of Programme

Flipchart or whiteboard, magazines, scissors, glue sticks, markers, meeting note pads, flipchart pad, camera.

Session Plan

Part A: Introductions and Learning Contract (1 hour 15 mins)

1. Welcome to programme (5 mins)
 - a. Introduce the Touchstone facilitator(s)
2. Practical issues (5 mins)
 - a. Introduce hosting agency, e.g. Third Age, Age & Opportunity, Active Retirement Ireland and any partnering agencies
 - b. Outline health and safety requirements: fire exits; emergency drill
 - c. Provide an orientation of the venue (toilets; lifts; kitchens)
 - d. Parking issues
 - e. Short breaks during parts of each session
 - f. Lunch arrangements (if being provided)
3. Introduce the Touchstone project (Active Ageing Partnership collaboration; evaluation in 2015 by Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway) (15 mins)
 - a. Programme objectives (explore issues regarding ageing; reflect on CE experiences and future plans; develop knowledge and skills; practice CE skills through a project)
 - b. Overview of 8 sessions (Handout – Outline of Programme)
 - c. Research component, if the programme is being formally evaluated by means of pre- and post-questionnaires (see Appendices for

copies of questionnaires)

- d. Charting progress: discuss with participants consent to take photos during the programme to document and record the work
4. Participant introductions (30 mins)
 - a. Each participant to talk to someone at table who they don't know (5 mins) with a view to introducing one another to the full group
 - b. Participants to introduce one another to the group (25 mins = 1 minute each)
 5. Adult-learning approach: how we wish to organise our learning on Touchstone ("shared ground rules"/learning contract) and what we would like to learn (20 mins)

Examples of items on learning contract:

- a. Respect for others
- b. Safe learning environment
- c. Diversity: recognition of different ways in which people learn
- d. Mutual support within group

BREAK (15 mins)

Part B: Introduction to Civic Engagement (workshop) (1 hour 30 mins)

1. Materials for the workshop are distributed during the break – magazines, scissors, glue sticks, markers, meeting note pads, flipchart pad page.
2. The facilitator explains the activity and outlines the theme: 'Involvement and Engagement in Community'. It is explained that 'community' can relate to local neighbourhood/area, county, national or international levels. The facilitator stresses the importance of ideas, views and opinions being captured, rather than the artistic merits of the collage. (5 mins)
3. Participants create a group collage, one per table of five participants (35 mins)
 - a. Facilitators circulate and encourage participants to review the magazines and select pictures, captions, words that are important to them. They can also write words/symbols or draw simple pictures to illustrate their views and opinions. (25 mins)
 - b. Participants explain their choices to fellow participants on their table, and as a group they arrange and complete their collage. (10 mins)
4. Each collage is displayed on the wall and a participant (or pair of participants) describes the group's collage of community involvement, and the meaning the different components have for individuals in the group. The facilitator notes/comments on interesting or common themes

arising from each group. (35 mins, 7 mins per group)

5. The facilitator leads a full-group discussion reflecting on any learning that may have occurred as a result of the activity (10 mins)

The discussion will focus on the following:

- The main ways in which people can be engaged in their community;
- Any differences that may be evident, e.g. group and individual civic engagement; once-off and continuous civic engagement; volunteering and social/political action;
- Enablers and barriers to civic engagement.

Participants are encouraged to note any ideas or CE activities that may have been discussed during the workshop that particularly interest them. The facilitator explains that there will be opportunities to explore these further as the programme proceeds, and perhaps develop them into action projects.

6. Short overview of next week's session and learning diary (5 mins)

Participants are given their 'homework' task, i.e.:

- To bring along examples of images relating to age and ageing so that the group can explore issue around representations of older age;
- To begin to note any observations or learning in their diary. It is important to explain that the diary is for their personal use only, will not be shared, and is not part of any assessment of the programme or the participant's engagement on the programme.

Part C: Research component (over lunch if being provided)

If it has been decided to evaluate the programme, distribute the pre-programme questionnaire for completion by participants, and provide appropriate support where needed.

Touchstone – Programme Outline

Time: 10.00am-1.00pm

Session	Date	Content	Facilitator(s)
1.		Programme introduction and engagement in the life of the community	
2.		Demographic change and the experience of ageism	
3.		Societal issues and bringing about change	
4.		Personal involvement in CE activities – contributions, strengths and weaknesses Types of CE; opportunities in the Touchstone programme area	
5.		Introduction to project planning	
6.		Introduction to research skills	
7.		Using the media and the formal political system to support CE	
8.		Practical support arrangements for CE projects	
	Ongoing	Action projects – development and implementation	
		Review of the programme and the action projects; Touchstone Celebration Event	



3.2.2 Session Two: Demographic Change and the Experience of Ageism

Topic and Content

Introduction; ageing and demographic change; ageism, age discrimination, stereotypes of ageing

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Understand key features of demographic change in Ireland
- Explore how older people are perceived by society
- Reflect on how age discrimination and negative age stereotypes might be challenged

Materials required

Handouts: Ageing Quiz; Ageism and Images of Ageing

Flipchart or whiteboard, markers, flipchart pad, magazines

Session Plan

Part A: Introduction and Ageing Quiz (1 hour 15 mins)

1. Introduction to session two (5 mins)
 - a. Reminder about adult-learning approach and agreed learning contract (e.g. respect, diversity, mutual support etc.)
 - b. Reminder about research/evaluation component, if appropriate (surveys; focus groups etc.)
 - c. Review of session one: orientation around civic engagement
2. Ageing quiz (15 mins)
 - a. Circulate copies of Ageing Quiz handout. Each participant to complete quiz – either alone or in pairs. Remind participants that the purpose of the exercise is to generate a discussion rather than to focus on ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers to quiz questions. Encourage participants to discuss their responses with others at their table.
3. Ageing and demography in Ireland (50 mins)
 - a. Facilitator-led discussion of group’s answers to quiz questions with reference to:
 - i. Demography (fertility, mortality, migration patterns); this might usefully draw attention to explanations for ‘wrong’ answers and potential links to prevailing age stereotypes or to policy/practice questions (see <http://www.cardi.ie/userfiles/Ageing%20statistics.pdf> with

associated references)

- ii. Growing diversity of Ireland’s older population (in relation, for example, to age, gender, income, ethnicity, health status, place of residence, lifestyles, family and household structures, caring roles, etc.)
 - iii. Headline figures around forms of civic engagement (volunteering; voting)
 - iv. Focus on ‘demographic dividend’; contributions made by older people to society
- b. Facilitator provides synopsis of learning arising from Ageing Quiz (5 mins)

BREAK (15 mins)

Part B: Ageism and Stereotypes of Ageing (1 hour 30 mins)

1. Participants were asked in previous session to bring along images of older people and of ageing. In small groups, participants should be invited to display and engage in a discussion about the different images that they have brought with them. If necessary, additional images can be introduced into the workshop from magazines that were used in previous week’s session. Participants are asked to describe the various images of ageing/older people in terms of both positive and negative characteristics. (15 mins)
2. Full-group discussion of stereotypes (and myths) of ageing: using two sheets of flip chart attached to wall, full group will identify a range of positive and negative characteristics associated with ageing/older people – and be invited to explain why they have assigned these labels to the images. (10 mins)
3. Facilitator encourages group to link discussion of stereotypes (and myths) of ageing to what we know about ‘the realities’ of population ageing (with reference to Ageing Quiz and subsequent discussion).
 - a. Key question 1: how can we reconcile the difference between representations of ageing and the realities of ageing?
 - b. Key question 2: how should policy respond, if at all, to stereotypes (and myths) of ageing? (e.g. Positive Ageing, Successful Ageing, Healthy Ageing, Active Ageing etc.) (20 mins)
4. Facilitator leads discussion on theme of ‘ageism’, drawing on handout Ageism and Images of Ageing (to be distributed after discussion for reading at home) (30 mins)
 - a. ‘Ageism is defined as a process of systematic stereotyping of, and discrimination against, people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin color and gender’ (Butler 1995).

- b. Participants invited to identify personal experiences of ageism (in workplace, dealing with public authorities, community settings, commercial settings, personal interactions etc.)
 - c. Johnson and Bytheway (1993) identify different types of ageism in society:
 - Institutionalised ageism – which includes legislative discrimination against people over (and below) specific ages;
 - Internalised ageism – which includes derogatory references to older people; and
 - Benevolent patronage – regarded as the most common form of ageism ('keeping an eye on the old folk').
 - d. Elsewhere, Bytheway and Johnson (1990) come up with a few suggestions about how to address ageism:
 - Old and 'non-old' people should stop using ageist language and vocabulary
 - People should recognise age realistically for what it is with 'an assertion of personhood, to remove chronological age as the "regulator" of social and allied practice, and to seek to avoid an "us-them" mentality apropos older age'.
5. The facilitator leads a full-group discussion reflecting on any learning that may have occurred during the session (10 mins)
- The discussion to focus on:
- The demography of ageing and the key role(s) of older people in Irish society
 - Stereotypes of ageing: how society represents 'age' and how this might affect older people's civic engagement
 - Recognition of, and responses to, ageism in Ireland
6. Bridge to session three (5 mins)
- Participants to explore wider societal issues and how they impact on older people. Focus on how to bring about change.
 - Participants encouraged to continue to note any ideas or CE activities that may have been discussed that particularly interest them.
 - Facilitator reminds the group that there will be opportunities to explore these further as the programme proceeds.

Touchstone Ageing Quiz

1. What proportion of Ireland's population is currently aged 65 and over?
 - a) 13%
 - b) 16%
 - c) 19%
 - d) 22%
 - e) 25%
2. A female child born in Ireland today can expect to live to:
 - a) 65 years
 - b) 70 years
 - c) 75 years
 - d) 80 years
 - e) More than 80 years
3. A man turning 65 years in Ireland can expect to live for an additional...
 - a) 8 years
 - b) 13 years
 - c) 18 years
 - d) 23 years
 - e) 28 years or more
4. About how many people are currently aged over 100 in Ireland?
 - a) Around 100
 - b) Around 200
 - c) Around 300
 - d) Around 400
 - e) More than 500
5. Most older people in Ireland are currently living in poverty.
 - a) True
 - b) False
6. Most older people in Ireland report having good or very good health.
 - a) True
 - b) False
7. In Ireland, what proportion of people aged 50 and over volunteer at least once a year?
 - a) 12%
 - b) 22%
 - c) 32%
 - d) 42%
 - e) 52%
8. In Ireland, what proportion of people aged 50 and over vote in general elections?
 - a) 60%
 - b) 65%
 - c) 70%
 - d) 75%
 - e) 80% or more

Handout – Ageism and Images of Ageing

This session examines prevailing social attitudes about older people and the ageing process. An examination of attitudes towards ageing and older people leads into a discussion of the prevalence of 'ageism' in modern society.

Attitudes towards older people: stereotypes of old age

Growing proportions of older people in society have altered public attitudes towards ageing and old age. With old age generally regarded as a 'problematic' period of life, (often negative) stereotypes relating to the causes and outcomes of ageing abound. Misconceptions about older age are reinforced, for example, by a wide range of products currently available in the market place - birthday cards with age-related messages, books which show how the ageing process can be avoided, cosmetics which purport to hide or even reverse outward signs of ageing. Mistaken beliefs about the ageing process often originate in people's fears about their own ageing and are 'reinforced by messages in the media and in advertising that emphasise the adverse effects of ageing' (Hooyman and Kiyak 1991: 39).

Negative stereotypes of old age are also present in debates about the state of intergenerational relations and the relative merits of various social policy measures. An example of this is the debate on the rationing of health care resources for people above a certain (chronological) age. Concerns have also been expressed about growing competition between younger and older generations for access to the state's scarce financial resources.

Stereotypes represent an attempt to simplify reality and to increase the comprehensibility of the world. While this can be a useful exercise, stereotyping harbours dangers of oversimplification. All manner of stereotypes characterise older people. For example these can relate to:

- the prevalence of loneliness amongst older people
- the myth that older people were better looked after and more respected by younger people in the (not clearly defined) 'good old days'
- the prevalence of illness and disease amongst older people
- the belief that older workers are less efficient and more likely to be absent than younger workers

While negative stereotypes of old age are most frequently found, there are also examples of more positive stereotypes. The latter often relate to the perceived qualities of older people, including expressions of older adult's wisdom. More recently, the invention by the media of the so-called WOOPIE (Well-Off Older Person) would also fall into this category of stereotyping.

The point to be made about stereotypes of old age is that their prevalence within society can often lead to the wrong policy responses to problems of old age. Thus, stereotypes of inefficient older workers had a direct bearing upon the introduction of rigid retirement ages. Equally, excessive attention paid to particular sub-groups of older people (WOOPIES) can divert attention away from the true needs of other groups of older people (the majority of old people on low incomes in this example).

Ageism

While social gerontologists have recognised the prevalence of ageist attitudes in society for a number of years, it has been only relatively recently that attempts have been made to clarify our understanding of this concept. In this respect, much attention has been paid to the definition adopted by Butler in The Encyclopedia of Aging: 'Ageism is defined as a process of systematic stereotyping of, and discrimination against, people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin color and gender' (Butler 1995).

In their analysis of ageism, Johnson and Bytheway (1993) carefully dissect Butler's



definition and ultimately arrive at a different definition of ageism. Their critique of Butler's definition is based on the use of several key words, including:

Old - criteria determining who can be regarded as old are open to question. Butler's use of the word 'old' fails to challenge the underlying presumption that there is a discernible population group who can be termed in this way.

Stereotyping - as the 'attribution of a range of distinctive characteristics to all members of a group' incorporates two elements. The first is based upon the assignment of negative characteristics to older people. The second is that stereotypes are based upon generalisations that may not be valid.

Discrimination - is perceived to be action taken in relation to all people of a certain group. It is 'the exercise of power by an organisation over the individual.

Sexism and racism - by referring to ageism in the same terms as sexism and racism, Butler's definition ignores the distinctive elements of age.

In conceptualising ageism, Johnson and Bytheway (1993) identify two main tendencies. The first is to perceive ageism as something solely related to older people (for example, in terms of regarding older people as a 'burden' upon our welfare systems). The second is to relate discussions of ageism to people of all ages, suggesting that ageism affects people throughout their lives and is not just a matter for older people. This point is developed further by Midwinter (1992):

Put plainly, if we are to castigate society for insisting on an end to employment at 65, we should be as wary of an obligation to start school at 5 and raise an eyebrow over the decision to grant the vote at 18. Both these - and a hundred other devices based on birthdays - lack any logical sense. (...) Those who are aghast at the caricature of 'old age' should be watchful lest they fall into the self-same trap of

generalising about 'childhood' or 'teenage' or 'adolescence' or 'middle-age' (Midwinter 1992: 1).

Summing up their analysis of definitions of ageism, Johnson and Bytheway (1993: 205) create a definition of their own: 'Ageism is the offensive exercise of power through reference to age'. For these authors, this definition takes account of different types of ageism in society:

- institutionalised ageism - which includes legislative discrimination against people over (and below) specific ages;
- internalised ageism - which includes derogatory references to older people; and
- benevolent patronage - regarded as the most common form of ageism ('keeping an eye on the old folk').

Given the prevalence of different forms of ageism, the question arises as to how best to tackle its existence. In another essay, Bytheway and Johnson (1990) come up with a few suggestions. They argue that old and 'non-old' people should stop using ageist language and vocabulary, recognise age realistically for what it is with 'an assertion of personhood, to remove chronological age as the "regulator" of social and allied practice, and to seek to avoid an "us-them" mentality apropos older age'.

Further reading

Butler, R. (1995) Ageism, in G. Maddox (Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Aging*, 2nd edition, New York: Springer: 38-39.

Bytheway, B. and Johnson, J. (1990) 'On defining ageism', *Critical Social Policy*, 27, 27-39.

Featherstone, M. and Hepworth, M. (1993) 'Images of ageing', in J. Bond et al. (eds) *Ageing in Society*, 2nd edition, Sage, London: 304-332.

Johnson, J. and Bytheway, B. (1993) 'Ageism: concept and definition', in J. Johnson and R. Slater (eds) *Ageing and Later Life*, Sage, London: 200-206.

3.2.3 Session Three: Societal Issues and Bringing about Change

Topic and Content:

Broader societal issues and how they impact on older people; bringing about change; key ageing policies and practice

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Explore wider societal issues and how they impact on older people
- Understand how key policies on ageing influence their lives
- Develop critical personal awareness skills
- Be motivated to bring about change

Materials required

Copies of National Policies handouts and Influencing Change handouts

Copies of recent newspapers for small group work

Flipchart stand and paper

Session Plan

Part A: (1 hour 15 mins)

1. Welcome and introductions (30 mins)
Each participant is asked to give their name, and a brief description of any previous involvement they have had in influencing change. The facilitator leads a group discussion regarding any common points that emerge from the descriptions.
2. National policies (25 mins)
The facilitator leads a discussion on the national policies using the National Policy handout. Any questions by the participants regarding the content of the main policies are dealt with.
3. Influencing Change (20 mins)
The facilitator then leads a discussion on influencing change using the Influencing Change handouts. The main discussion points are recorded on the flipchart.

Break (15 mins)

Part B: (1 hour 30 mins)

1. Small-group discussion (40 mins)
Participants are formed into small groups (4/ 5 participants per group). Each group nominates a note-taker and person to provide feedback. Each group is asked to:
 - Identify current issues that are impacting on the lives of older people from the newspapers provided.
 - Prioritise three of these issues.
 - For each of the three issues: identify (a) who's making the decisions; and (b) who's influencing the decisions?
2. Whole-group feedback and discussion (50 mins)
 - a. Feedback to the larger group (25 mins)
The nominated person from each of the small groups provides feedback on the discussion and decisions made by the group.
 - b. Whole-group discussion (25 mins)
The facilitator leads a full group discussion on how participants can influence change either individually or collectively.
The facilitator reminds participants to record their learning from today in their learner's diary.

Handouts – National Policies

Societal issues- International Context

'It must be remembered that increasing longevity is an indicator of social and economic progress: a great triumph of civilization and, specifically, of science and public policy over many of the causes of premature death which truncated lives in earlier times. Therefore, we should recognise that this unique phenomenon is one of the great achievements of the 20th century.'

(Walker, A., 2002. A Strategy for Active Ageing. International Social Security Review, Vol. 55 (1): 121 – 139)

Active Ageing – A Policy Framework (WHO, 2002)

Calls for action under three 'pillars':

1. Participation
2. Health
3. Security
 - Roadmap for designing multi-sectoral active ageing policies
 - Focus on the factors that affect how people and populations age
 - Life-course perspective
 - Balance between the roles of individuals and Government in facilitating active ageing

18 UN Principles for Older Persons (United Nations General Assembly, 1991)

Principles were translated into discrete themes:

1. Independence; 2. Participation; 3. Care; 4. Self-fulfilment; 5. Dignity

The National Positive Ageing Strategy (Department of Health, 2013)

- Overarching blueprint for age related policy and service delivery across Government and society
- Framework for mainstreaming policy making - at all levels and across all sectors
- Integrated strategy addressing a wide spectrum of issues
- Developed by a cross-Departmental Group and an NGO Liaison Group
- Public consultation process

The National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013)

1. Healthy ageing
2. Health and personal social services
3. Carers
4. Employment and retirement
5. Education and lifelong learning
6. Volunteering
7. Cultural and social participation
8. Transport
9. Financial security
10. Housing
11. The built environment
12. Safety and security
13. Elder abuse

Handouts – National Policies (cont.)

The National Positive Ageing Strategy - Vision Statement

'Ireland will be a society for all ages that celebrates and prepares properly for individual and population ageing. It will enable and support all ages and older people to enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential. It will promote and respect older people's engagement in economic, social, cultural, community and family life, and foster better solidarity between generations. It will be a society in which the equality, independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people are pursued at all times.'

Goal 1

Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities.

Goal 2

Support people as they age to maintain improve or manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Goal 3

Enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Goal 4

Support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland.

Healthy Ireland 2013 – 2025

A framework for improved health and wellbeing; foundation for the implementation of the **National Positive Ageing Strategy**; goals and objectives => action on the ground; timelines and performance indicators; responsibilities across Government and wider civil society



Handouts - Influencing Change

'One's ability to influence decisions is dependent on many factors –social class, status, money, recognition, knowing the policy makers, understanding how the system works and communication one's message in an articulate and effective manner!'

(Brian Harvey, 2002. A Guide to Influencing Policy in Ireland)

What are you campaigning about?



Handouts - Influencing Change

'Decision-making in any democratic society involves the complex interplay of many groups – government ministers, civil servants, politicians, media and lobby groups.'

'Policy-making may be described as the process whereby the government and the authorities reach decisions, set out priorities, satisfy competing interest groups and lay down the underlying approaches to their work!'

(Brian Harvey, 2002. A Guide to Influencing Policy in Ireland)

Key questions:

Who has the power to make changes?

Who influences the decision making?


What skills and resources are needed to successfully to bring about change?


<i>Get involved</i>	Stop and think!
<i>Get involved</i>	Describe / analyse the problem and its impact(s)
<i>Get involved</i>	Ask other people what they think.....what should be done?
<i>Get involved</i>	Where can you get more information?
<i>Get involved</i>	Are there other groups / organisations concerned?
<i>Get involved</i>	National organisation(s) concerned?


“
 If you think you're too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.
 - Dalai Lama
 ”


Influencing Change Planning Checklist

– Assembling your Case


 **What is the problem / why is it a problem – information / documentation / research?**

 **How is the issue affecting people / how seriously?**

 **What do you want done about it?**

 **Who is responsible for doing that?**

 **Is this a problem of policy, resources, procedures or what?**

 **What are the benefits and to whom - if the issue is resolved?**

Influencing Change - Planning to Approach the Decision-makers

01

Who are you approaching and why - List?

02

What exactly do you want them to do or to change – clear objectives / specific proposals?

03

Is this a local / regional / national matter?

04

Who (if anyone) has the legal responsibility here?

05

Should you approach officials / elected representatives / both / others?

06

If you approach officials – who is the appropriate person and at what level?

3.2.4 Session Four: Civic Engagement & Me

Content

CE from a personal perspective; benefits of CE; 'best fit' for participants in particular CE roles and organisations; barriers to CE and how these may be overcome; local CE opportunities

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Share as a group the benefits of being civically engaged
- Learn about themselves and the CE opportunities that would/would not suit them
- Examine the barriers to CE erected by community and also by themselves
- Explore how these personal and societal barriers to CE may be overcome
- Become aware of the CE opportunities available locally (including the Older People's Council)
- Reflect on what CE activities they may be interested in (in a general sense), and for development as an action project

Materials Required

Worksheet – Learning More about Me; Handouts – Key to Personality; Opportunities and Challenges; Local Opportunities to become Civically Engaged.

Flipchart and markers

Session Plan

Part A: Benefits and Personal 'Fit' for Civic Engagement (1 hour)

1. Participants introduce themselves to the group (5 mins)
2. Agreed benefits of being involved (5 mins)
Facilitate a group discussion on the benefits of CE and record the agreed benefits on the flipchart
3. Learning More About Me (50 mins)
 - a) Distribute the worksheet Learning More about Me to participants to complete and self-score. The scores will indicate their dominant personality trait(s) (10 mins)
 - b) Distribute the handout Key to Personality to each participant with time given to read (5 mins)
 - c) Facilitate a group discussion on the worksheet and the handout (10 mins)
 - d) Facilitate a group discussion. Ask participants to consider what might be their volunteering or civic engagement challenges

based on what they now know about their personality type. Note the points on the flipchart as applying to each personality type (20 mins)

- e) Distribute the handout Opportunities and Challenges which affirms and reinforces the points made in the discussion. Facilitate a short discussion to summarise the lessons learned (5 mins)

BREAK (15 mins)

Part B: Obstacles to Civic Engagement and how to overcome them (45 mins)

1. Establish small groups to respond to two discussion tasks: 1) what are the personal obstacles to becoming involved in CE? and 2) what are the community/societal obstacles to older people engaging in CE? (30 mins)
 - a) Appoint a group facilitator and a note taker in each group, and support small-group discussions (15 mins)
 - b) Record the feedback to both discussion points on the flipchart (10 mins)
 - c) Facilitate a group discussion to summarise the main points raised (5 mins)
2. How do I need to change/how does the community need to change to overcome the identified obstacles? (15 mins)

Facilitate a full-group discussion on these questions, and record and summarise the responses under both columns

Part C: Local CE Opportunities (55 mins)

1. The speaker from the Older People's Council (45 mins)
 - a) The speaker will give an overview of the work of the Council. It is useful if they also speak about their personal motivation for becoming involved in CE activities, any barriers they've encountered and how they overcame them, and the personal benefits of being engaged in CE activities (35 mins)
 - b) Group question and answer session (10 mins)
2. Local CE Opportunities (10 mins)
Distribute the handout Local Opportunities to become Civically Engaged. This should be developed in advance of the session and include opportunities available from Age & Opportunity, Third Age, Active Retirement Ireland, and Age Friendly Ireland. Facilitate a group discussion, and give participants an opportunity to discuss the opportunities, describe any

existing involvement they have in the initiatives and organisations outlined, and identify any opportunities that may be missing from the handout.

Part D: Short Overview of next week's session and use of the learning diary (5 mins)

Give participants their 'homework' task. Remind them to use their learning diary to think about what they've learned, and to reflect on what area of CE they might like to become involved in, or what CE activity they would like to focus on as part of their action project. Again emphasise that this is to support them to reflect on their learning, and that the contents will only be shared by them with other participants if they choose to do so.

Participants are reminded that the following session will focus on how to develop a plan for their action project.

Worksheet - Learning More About Me

Interests Type A

- 1 2 3 4 5 I like fixing and repairing things
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like to be as fit and active as I can
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like making things with my hands
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like gardening and doing things outdoors
- 1 2 3 4 5 I enjoy a bit of hard, physical work
- 1 2 3 4 5 I am comfortable working with tools and machinery

Total A score _____

Interests Type B

- 1 2 3 4 5 I like to understand things thoroughly
- 1 2 3 4 5 I enjoy solving problems
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like learning about new things
- 1 2 3 4 5 I enjoy managing people and situations
- 1 2 3 4 5 I enjoy making decisions
- 1 2 3 4 5 I feel I am a good leader

Total B score _____

Interests Type C

- 1 2 3 4 5 I like reading, radio and television
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like to be different
- 1 2 3 4 5 I can lose myself in being creative
- 1 2 3 4 5 I am aware of nature and changing seasons
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like to use my imagination
- 1 2 3 4 5 I express myself through the arts

Total C score _____

Please continue to next page



Interests Type D

- 1 2 3 4 5 I like to put myself out for others
- 1 2 3 4 5 I invariably talk through things with others
- 1 2 3 4 5 I seek to be close to people
- 1 2 3 4 5 I get a lot from helping people
- 1 2 3 4 5 I feel that most situations can be helped
- 1 2 3 4 5 I enjoy meeting many different types of people

Total D score _____

Interests Type E

- 1 2 3 4 5 I like to be given clear, precise directions
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like to take care in everything I do
- 1 2 3 4 5 I like a clear structure and a regular routine
- 1 2 3 4 5 I am very reliable
- 1 2 3 4 5 If planning an event, I will do it down to the last detail
- 1 2 3 4 5 I enjoy working with figures.

Total E scores _____

Handout – Key to Personality

Type A People

A type people are absolutely practical and resourceful

You like using your hands to work tools, machinery and equipment. You like building, making and repairing things. You approach problems – your own and others – by practical action. You tend to be down-to-earth and matter-of-fact. You are patient and may be physically fit.

Most likely to say: *'Let me have a look at that for you'*.

Least likely to say *'Oh, I'm just a helpless female/male'*

Type B People

B type people are business-like, organised and managerial.

You are good at motivating other people. You are outgoing, lively and enthusiastic. You like being in charge and you are successful in organising people and events. You have strong opinions on most issues. You are good at decision-making and tend to stay confident in what you have decided.

Most likely to say: *'Leave it to me'*.

Least likely to say *'This is a bit beyond me'*.

Type C People

C type people are creative and artistic

You like to feel unique and different, rather than one of the herd. You have imagination and may express yourself in your looks, the way you furnish your home and tend your garden. You are quite independent-minded, and you can be quite happy to do your own thing

Most likely to say: *'I'll do it my way'*.

Least likely to say: *'Appearances don't matter'*.

Type D People

D type people are definitely social and caring

You like helping people and enjoy close friendships and relationships. Definitely not a loner, you are at ease in most company. Sometimes you find it hard to say 'no', and you feel good when helping others. You are outgoing and helpful and can be sensitive. You can be very patient if need be

Most likely to say: *'Can I help you?'*

Least likely to say: *'I want to be on my own'*.

Type E People

E people are extremely methodical and systematic

You enjoy detailed work which calls for concentration, clarity and accuracy. You are probably neat, tidy, precise, patient and efficient. You like to set up routines and stick to them. You do not enjoy spontaneity, preferring planned activities. You are a reliable timekeeper and may have a good mathematical brain.

Most likely to say: *'I always walk the dog at six o'clock'*

Least likely to say: *'I'm a bit all over the place today'*.

Handout - Opportunities and Challenges

Personality Type A

As a resourceful person, you will be an asset to any group you join. You will be patient and measured and good in a crisis. The kind of civic engagement that suits you best may use these practical traits, e.g. helping people in a practical way (such as Age Action's Care & Repair), or work that involves some physical effort.

On the other hand, you may find it challenging to join a group which you consider disorganised, or which lacks a clear purpose or vision. You may become impatient with others who prefer lots of talk, and may appear to you to be going around in circles rather than taking appropriate action.

Personality Type B

You are used to being in charge. You are effective, a good manager. All these are valuable attributes to contribute to a volunteering or campaigning group. You may have experience in influencing and campaigning, and have good contacts in the right places.

On the other hand, you may prefer a leadership role in any group you join – and there may not be a vacancy for this position. Many informal groups do not have a hierarchical structure and use discussion and negotiation to reach agreement – you may find this difficult. You are a quick thinker, and as with Personality A, may want to move too quickly to a decision. You also may think you know best.

Personality Type C

You are inclined to be a free spirit, and to see things in a creative way. You will be an asset to any group where image, promotion, marketing and gaining publicity is important, as you may have some good imaginative ideas.

On the other hand, you may find it difficult to be a member of a group. You can be accustomed to going your own way, and others

may consider your ideas a bit too far out. You may become easily bored with the mundane committee agenda. You may have to rein in your more dramatic side, and learn to go more with the group flow.

Personality Type D

You have a caring personality and gain a lot of satisfaction and self-worth from helping others, and working for good causes. You may develop good group relationships with other group members. You are also very obliging, and will be an active member of any group you join. You work well with consensus.

On the other hand, you need to take care that others don't take advantage of you. You may need to watch a tendency to be over-involved, and be all things to all people. Caring people sometimes find it hard to have their say if their views are not in agreement with others. As a member of a group, you may need to stand up for what you believe in, even if it courts some unpopularity in the group.

Personality Type E

You will be an asset to any group or organisation which values efficiency and needs a methodical approach. You may be excellent at setting up systems, or carrying out operations which call for precision and efficiency. You will be a reliable, punctual member of any group or organisation.

On the other hand, you like situations which are controlled, and like to be in control yourself. You will not enjoy volunteering or campaigning situations which are run on rather 'ad hoc' lines. You may want to impose order, and have things done your way. You may find change difficult, and wish to stick to agreed routines. Spontaneity, or responding quickly to ongoing situations may be hard for you.



Handout - Local Opportunities to Become Civically Engaged

It is important to give local contact details, where possible, of the various organisations and initiatives that provide CE opportunities in the Touchstone programme area. The following provides a possible framework which can be used.

1. Third Age Programmes e.g. *Fáilte Isteach* – older volunteers teaching conversational English to migrants; ***Sage*** Support & Advocacy for Older People – trains independent volunteers to support and advocate for older people Website: www.thirdageireland.ie

2. Active Retirement Ireland – *Active retirement groups* in the local area. Website: www.activeirl.ie

3. Age & Opportunity Programmes e.g. *Ageing with Confidence* – provides education for health, develops life skills, promotes positive mental health and builds self-confidence; ***Get Engaged*** – develops individual agency and community capacity and action, and promotes leadership and community development; the ***Bealtaine Festival*** – offers opportunities to engage in arts and culture. Website: www.ageandopportunity.ie

4. Age Friendly Ireland provided opportunities to become involved in making local areas age-friendly through the work of the ***Older People's Council***. Website: www.agefriendlyireland.ie

5. Faith-based organisations e.g. *Society of St Vincent de Paul* – provides home and hospital visitations and many other services. Website: www.svp.ie

6. Local Volunteering Centre – provides a ***range of volunteer opportunities*** and ideas for people of all ages. Website: www.volunteer.ie

7. Local Branches of national organisations e.g. *Simon Community* – provides a range of services for people in need of social support; ***Hospice Foundation*** – aims to provide the best care at end of life for people and practical support for their loved ones; ***Samaritans*** – provides a listening service to people who are in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide; ***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland*** – provides dementia specific services and supports and advocates for the rights and needs of all people living with dementia and their carers.

8. Other locally-based organisations and initiatives not specifically targeted at older people e.g. *Adult Literary Schemes* – provide one to one tutoring for adults with literacy problems; ***Refugee Support Groups*** – work on a range of projects with people in the asylum process and/or with refugee status; ***Charity Shop Volunteer*** – charity shops run by the main charities often provide basic training and facilitate volunteers you with a flexible volunteering schedule.



3.2.5 Session Five: Introduction to Project Planning

Topic and Content

Introduction to project planning; identifying possible areas of interest for the project

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Learn to plan, monitor and assess a project
- Identify project areas for development and begin basic project planning

Materials required

Handout – Project Design and Management

Flipchart

Session Plan

Part A: Project planning (1 hour 15 mins)

1. Welcome and Introductions (25 mins)

Each participant to give their name and a brief description of any previous involvement they've had in planning and developing a project of community interest.

2. Brainstorm (25 mins)

Ask the group to identify the key steps in planning, developing and delivering a project – record their responses on the flipchart

3. Prioritise and Discuss Steps in Planning (25 mins)

Facilitate the group to prioritise these steps (on the flipchart) and through group discussion organise them sequentially. Circulate Project Design and Management handout and go through the key stages. Encourage the group to comment, ask questions, and give examples from their own experience.

BREAK (15 mins)

Part B: Identifying and planning a project (1 hour 30 mins)

1. Identifying projects (30 mins)

Break the group into small groups (4/5 participants in each group). Ask small groups to identify possible projects that they would be interested in – even broad areas of interest.

Facilitate feedback to the larger group and list all of the suggestions on the flipchart.

Ask each participant in the group to indicate their first preference. Record each choice and subsequently identify the most popular four or five projects.

2. Working on Draft Project Plans (45 mins)

Once again break the group into smaller groups, into their preferred areas of interest. Ask each group to nominate a note taker. Ask each group to discuss each of the following ten points and to record their decisions:

1. Agree a project proposal – reminding them to be realistic and specific – something that is do-able.....no matter how small;
2. Identify a possible title for the project;
3. Consider what information is already available and the likely sources of that information;
4. What additional information are they looking for?
5. Where could they get this information from and how?
6. What resources are required?
7. Allocate key tasks to individuals within the group – decide who can / will do what;
8. Draft a realistic timeframe for the project;
9. Identify possible problems / difficulties and consider how they could / should be managed;
10. Arrange next meeting and key tasks to be completed for that meeting.

3. Close (15 mins)

Facilitate a full-group discussion to address any questions or comments from the group. Remind participants that today was just a 'trial run', and that they still have plenty of time to decide on the project area they would like to work on. Encourage participants to use their learning diary to reflect on their choice of project area.

Project Design and Management Handout

The key to a successful project is in the planning. Creating a project plan is the first thing you should do when undertaking a project. Project planning often gets ignored in favour of 'getting on with the work'. A common and costly mistake is to leap in and begin working without designing what it is you will do and planning how to carry it out!

Phases of Project Management:

(1) Project proposal, (2) planning and design, (3) execution, (4) monitoring, and (5) completion and presentation.

1. Project Proposal

Think about the nature and scope of the project and identify your topic.

- o What do you want to know, prove, demonstrate, describe, analyse, test, investigate or examine and why?
- o Title - decide on it! The title should describe the content and direction of your project.
e.g. **Some** Views on Ageism from **Teenagers in Galway**
An overview of supported housing schemes for older people in **Galway**
Comments on the National Positive Ageing Strategy from **Older People in Galway**
An example of a community based initiative to alleviate social isolation amongst older people in **rural** Ireland
- o Background – What is already known or unknown about the subject?

2. Planning and Design

- o What information do you need and what methods will you use to collect it?
- o Where can you go to get information?

- o Do you need any special equipment / resources?
- o Timetable – collecting the information / analysing it / writing it up
- o Are there any perceived barriers or pitfalls and, if so, how do you propose to manage these?
- o Does the project involve any ethical considerations?

3. Execution

Doing the work – getting on with the project plan!

4. Monitoring

Observing the execution of your project!

- o What stage is the project at?
- o Is it on track / at the stage that it should be at?
- o If not – what needs to be done to get back on track?

5. Completion – Project Report

Project Report

Generally five paragraphs / sections / chapters

(1) Introduction

- o Introduce the topic
- o Give the structure of the project

(2) Context for the project

- o Background – set the scene - what's known / unknown already?
- o The policy context - if relevant (e.g. The National Positive Ageing Strategy, 2013)
- o Geographical location – if relevant

(3) Methodology

- o Rationale for doing the project – highlight why it is important / worth pursuing?
- o Aims / objectives of the project – what



Project Design and Management Handout (Cont.)

are you trying to describe / analyse / do?

e.g. this project aims to:

- Provide a summary of the supported housing schemes that are available for older people in Galway
- Present the advantages and disadvantages of each option

- o Describe how you collected your data / information for the project
- o Limitations of the project?
- o Any ethical considerations?

(4) Project findings

- o What did the information / data that you gathered tell you?

(5) Discussion and Conclusion(s)

- o What can you deduce from the information?
- o What questions are left unanswered?
- o Did the results pose any new questions?

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS – PRESENTATION

1. Know your audience

Who are they / what are they interested in / why are they there – what will they be expecting?

2. The setting / context

What's the particular occasion or setting e.g. academic conference / formal workshop / informal information session? It's important that you prepare accordingly!

3. Preparation

How are you going to present your material / what is most appropriate for your audience and for the occasion - written report / PowerPoint / wall chart / poster / photographs etc? You need to prepare accordingly!

e.g. PowerPoint

- **Identify your key points** – To help the audience retain the messages you're giving them, use the chunking principle i.e. organise your information into five to seven key points.
- **Don't include every detail** – Good presentations encourage the audience to learn more by asking questions to maximise their understanding of the issue.
- **Use an outline** – At the beginning, tell your audience what you intend to cover, and let them know what to expect. This helps to capture their interest from the start.
- **Start and end strongly** – Capture people's interest as soon as you begin, and leave them with a message they won't forget. It's tempting to put all of your effort into the main body of the presentation. However, if you don't get people's attention at the start, they'll probably lose interest and miss the rest of the presentation anyway!
- **Use examples** – Where possible, use lots of examples to support your points. A lecture is often the least interesting and engaging form of presentation. Look for ways to liven things up by telling stories, talking about real-life examples, and using metaphors to engage your audience fully.
- **A picture is worth a thousand words!**
- **Practice.**

Always avoid PowerPoint Prozac!

Some useful websites to have a look at:

Graphics design etc. <https://www.canva.com>

'Pins' for anything you could think of:

<https://www.pinterest.com>

3.2.6 Session Six: Introduction to Research Skills

Topic and Content

Introduction to basic social research methods; the research process; asking questions; research design; ethical issues in research

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Become familiar with basic social research methods
- Identify which research skills can be used on a project they are developing
- Consider different types of research design
- Explore ethical issues that may arise in their project (or research element of their project)

Materials required

Handouts – Research Process, Asking Questions, Designing a Research Study, Ethical Principles

Flipchart or whiteboard, markers, flipchart pad

Session Plan

Part A: Introduction to the research process (1 hour 15 mins)

1. The research process (30 mins)
 - a. With reference to Research Process handout, facilitator introduces participants to the idea of research occurring in a regular, planned cycle.
 - b. Research process starts with a question/concern that the researcher is interested in finding answers to (or understanding better).
 - c. Small-group exercise: in small groups, participants are encouraged to identify research questions that would interest them in relation to Civic Engagement:
 - Questions/concerns might derive from personal interest; something they have read/heard about; a particular social problem etc.
 - Good questions/concerns should be related to a clearly defined topic
 - Good questions should be researchable or feasible (i.e. not so broad as to be unmanageable)
 - d. Small groups should feed back on the topics of their interest to the wider group, generating a discussion about the nature of research questions and the degree to which they are or are not feasible for a small-scale

research project.

2. Asking questions (45 mins)
 - a. Facilitator introduces participants to one commonly used approach to eliciting information – asking questions as part of a structured questionnaire. Facilitator notes challenges associated with asking questions, to be explored in small-group exercise. (5 mins)
 - b. Small-group exercise. Distribute the Asking Questions handout to groups of 4/5 participants. Invite participants to review the questions, identifying any issues that they can see in relation to the questions or response categories. (15 mins)
 - c. Full-group exercise. Facilitator asks small groups in turn to identify what they regard as being problematic with the various questions and how they could elicit the desired information with different questions. After each question, ask other groups if they have identified other issues with the questions. Key issues to consider:
 - Complex or non-specific question wording (e.g. double-barrelled questions, use of double negatives in questions, lack of definition of 'concepts')
 - Leading questions
 - Questions based on implicit assumptions (e.g. that people are lonely)
 - Poor response categories (too few or too many categories, overlapping categories)
 - d. Facilitator summarises some key features associated with asking 'good' questions. Facilitator also points participants towards places where they can find examples of tried-and-tested questions:
 - Major surveys (EU-SILC, SHARE, TILDA, Census etc.)
 - Question Bank in UK (<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/variables>)

BREAK (15 mins)

Part B: Doing research (1 hour 30 mins)

1. Research design (45 mins)
 - a. Facilitator introduces session by distributing handout on Designing a Research Study. In small groups, participants are invited to discuss the questions posed in relation to each of the research designs. Each small group should nominate a rapporteur who will feed back the key points arising from discussion to the whole group. (15 mins)
 - b. Feedback from small groups. Taking each

research design issue in turn, insights from small groups are fed in to a general discussion about the relative merits and potential challenges associated with the selected research design (15 mins per item).

c. Discussion to focus on:

- Generalisability of findings arising from 'convenience' sampling (e.g. whether residents who use services are likely to be passing by a particular street corner at a particular point in time; whether people who have been sampled have views about local services; whether people are Galway residents etc)
- Value of self-selecting research samples (would magazine readers have particular types of characteristics? Is the sample biased in any way? How would you know who had responded to a survey (age, other socio-demographic characteristics)? Are some people more likely to respond to surveys than others? How do these factors influence the validity of research findings?)
- Challenges of accessing samples (absence of registers; accessing confidential information; using community stakeholders or cultural organisations to access particular populations; identifying whether people have particular characteristics, such as being lonely; whether recruiting other people to a sample might generate a more rounded view of the research question)

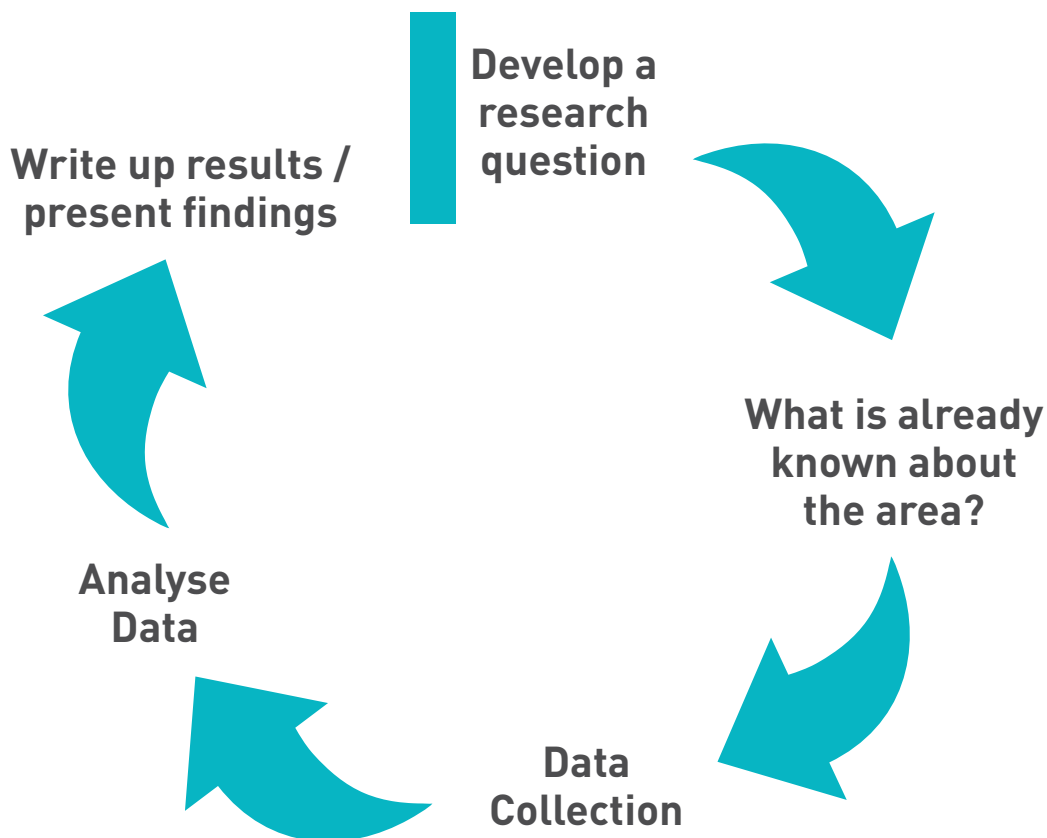
2. Ethical issues (45 mins)

- a. Facilitator introduces session and its focus on ethical issues. Emphasise that ethical practice underpins all research, from the start of the research process through to its completion. Whole group discussion on why it is important to conduct research in an ethical manner – based on own personal experience or on knowledge of unethical practices associated with earlier research or experimentation. (10 mins)
- b. Facilitator divides group into smaller groups (encouraging people to change groups, if needed). Groups are given Ethical Principles handout with four ethical scenarios. Each group is to spend 15 mins discussing the various scenarios, identifying the ethical considerations involved and suggesting ways in which ethical principles might be met (15 mins)
- c. Whole-group discussion. Facilitator leads a whole-group discussion based on insights from small groups. This will draw on key ethical principles, such as informed consent,

avoidance of harm, requirement to maintain confidentiality, researcher safety, the use of incentives (15 mins)

- d. Summary: facilitator summarises key learning points from the session (5 mins)

THE RESEARCH PROCESS



Why are research questions necessary?

Without clear research questions there is a danger that your study will be unfocused and become unmanageable.

Having clear research questions helps you with your:

- Literature review and search
- Decision(s) about the type of research design that is appropriate
- Decision(s) about the type(s) of data you may need to collect
- Analysis of any data you collect
- Writing up of your research findings
- Making suggestions for policy and practice

How to derive appropriate questions?

- General research area (personal interest; literature; social problem, etc.)
- Focus on particular aspect of research
- Choose questions that are related to the research area
- Questions have to be researchable or feasible
- Scope and resources of proposed study

Asking questions... a simple task?

What is wrong with each of the following questions? How could the questions be improved?

1. What is your annual income?

1. Below €10,000
2. €10,000-15,000
3. €15,000-20,000
4. €20,000-25,000
5. €25,000 and over

2. How satisfied are you with the provision of health services and social services in Galway?

1. Very satisfied
2. Fairly satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Fairly dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

3. Which of the following means do you use to travel to the Touchstone programme?

1. Bus
2. Car
3. Bike

4. How often do you feel lonely?

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Occasionally
4. Fairly often
5. Often
6. Very often
7. Almost always
8. Always

5. Are you against a ban on smoking in public places?

1. Yes
2. No

6. Would you agree to cutting taxes further even though welfare provision for the most needy older people might be reduced?

1. Yes
2. No

Designing a research study... a simple task?

1. A researcher is interested in finding out about Galway residents' views about local services for older people. She positions herself on a street corner in Galway and asks 1 person in 5 who walks by to be interviewed. She continues doing this until she has a sample of 200 people. What will the researcher be able to say about Galway residents' views of local services for older people?
2. A magazine aimed at older people includes a self-completion questionnaire on the attitudes of older people to planned changes in social care provision. The magazine receives over 10,000 replies from its readers. What could the submitted replies tell you about the attitudes of older people?
3. How would you obtain a sample of the following groups?
 - a) Older adults who are diabetic in order to study the effect of diabetes on family and social relationships.
 - b) Second-generation Italians (i.e. people who were born in Ireland and whose parents were born in Italy) for a study of the maintenance of Italian cultural practices.
 - c) People aged 65 and over who are lonely for a study of loneliness across the life course?
 - d) People who belong to an active retirement association in order to study the reasons for joining such an association?

Ethical principles

- Participants need to be informed about the purpose of the research they are being asked to take part in.
- Participants need to understand the risks (if any) associated with the research.
- Participants should be informed of the benefits of taking part in the research.
- Participants should be informed that they can withdraw from the research at any time without any negative effects.

Information

- Ensure there are clear procedures for safeguarding the information you collect.
- Ensure your field notes and transcripts do not contain any information that could identify participants.
- Always keep your data locked away and/or password protected (on a computer).
- Share data only with those who are part of the research team.

Ethical Considerations

Consider the following scenarios and identify what you consider to be the ethical issues involved.

Scenario 1:

Participants agree to take part in a study on loneliness; there is an additional element to the study which involves giving a saliva sample. The researcher notes that some participants are not keen to do this. However, as they will receive €25 for this part of the study they consent to take part.

Scenario 2:

Recruitment of participants for a study is conducted by one researcher and the interview will be conducted by another researcher. When the researcher conducting the interviews goes to the house of one participant it turns out the researcher knows this person.

Scenario 3:

A researcher wants to do a study on older people in nursing homes. Recruitment of participants will be made in conjunction with the matron of the nursing home.

Scenario 4:

A researcher is conducting an interview with a married couple. The interview takes place in the home of the couple and they are both present for the interview.

3.2.7 Session Seven: Media and the Political System

Topic and Content:

Using the media and the formal political system to support Civic Engagement

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Have a greater understanding of how to engage with the media to promote their project
- Have a greater understanding of ways to engage with local and national politicians to create awareness and knowledge about issues.

Materials required

Flip Chart, markers, Blu-Tack

Copies of handouts – Forging a Relationship with Press; Golden Rules for Press Statements; How To Write a Press Release; 'Dos and Don'ts' of Interviews; Radio Interviews; Irish Political System, and Planning Your Action.

Session Plan

Part A: Introduction and Writing a Press Release (1hr 30mins)

1. Introduction (30 mins)

The facilitator introduces the session and gives background information on Active Retirement Ireland. Participants are reminded of the learning contract and the importance of a supportive learning environment.

The facilitator gives an overview of the session objectives as outlined above.

2. Using the Media to Support Civic Engagement (1 hour)

- a. Facilitator asks participants about their views on how older people and their issues are portrayed in the media – paper, broadcast and social media. Facilitator then gives input on the media using the relevant handout, Forging a Relationship with Press (10 mins)
- b. Small-group work (25 mins). Ask participants to take the opportunity to work with people they may not have already worked with to date. When the small groups are formed ask them to agree a member to act as spokesperson. Ask each group to identify an issue they would like to highlight and work on. Distribute the handouts Golden Rules for Press Statements and How to Write a Press Release. Give each group a flip chart

sheet and markers. Using the information on the handouts, and learning from the facilitator's input, ask each group to write a Press Statement highlighting their issue. The facilitator should circulate and support but not lead the discussions. The facilitator should also remind each group of the time remaining. When completed, each group should display their work on the wall.

- c. When all groups have displayed their work, ask each spokesperson to present their Press Release to the full group (25 mins, 5 mins per group). When all groups have concluded their feedback, facilitate a discussion to identify key learning points.

Buzz Break (5 mins)

3. Interview Skills (30 mins)

- a. Facilitator gives a brief input on interviews and radio interviews using the handouts 'Dos and Don'ts' of Interviews and Radio Interviews (5 mins).
- b. Mock Interviews (15 mins). The facilitator asks small groups to volunteer to do a mock radio interview based on their Press Statement and the issue they identified. The exercise only requires two groups. Set the first group in a circle, placing two chairs facing one chair. Give the 'interviewers' time to prepare their questions. Conduct the mock Interview, for approximately three mins. Repeat the exercise with the second group.

Facilitate the 'interviewees' to discuss how they felt being interviewed and what they learnt. Ask the 'interviewers' what they felt about their experience. Facilitate the full group to discuss what they learned about the issues discussed in the interviews (10 mins).

Break (10 mins)

Part B: Engaging with the political system (45 mins)

- a. Facilitator asks the group about their experience of engaging with the political system. Facilitator identifies themes (if any) emerging from the comments (5 mins).
- b. The facilitator gives an input on the Irish Electoral system and Advocacy using the handout Irish Political System (10 mins).
- c. Small-group work (15 mins). In small groups participants explore the options open to use the political system to enhance their opportunity to create a climate for change in relation to the issue they've been working on. Use the handout

Planning your Action to support this exercise.

- d. Facilitate a full-group discussion on what they've learned about the options open to them to mobilize the political system in support of their issue (10 mins).

Close the session with a brief overview of what has been learned (5 mins).

NB: Remind participants to reflect on their areas of interest for projects. Ask them to bring along any work they did in session five on project planning to the final session, where support arrangements for the proposed projects will be completed.

Handout – Forging a Relationship with the Press

Simply writing and sending a statement is rarely enough to get your story carried. You should try and follow up each press release with a phone call to the newspaper or radio station involved. Over time, you will start to develop a relationship with the journalists, researchers and editors. You will get a feel for the kind of stories they are interested in and how best to sell them a story.

Some journalists are specialists, working in a specific field for their publication or broadcaster as the Environment Correspondent or correspondent for a certain area or town. Trying to interest them in stories outside their areas of interest is a waste of time. But a lot of reporters for local newspapers have areas of personal interest. A reporter might be interested in issues about positive ageing for example, or about holidays and excursions. If you can get a journalist personally interested in your ARA you've built a contact you can go back to again and again.

A positive working relationship with the journalists in your area is crucial and generally they are looking for the same. Journalists need sources, they need ideas for stories to fill space each week and if they come to rely on you as a good source for information or story ideas, or as someone they can contact for a quote, it will be to your benefit.

As important as a good positive relationship can be, a bad one can be seriously destructive. A journalist who gets inaccurate information is not likely to forget anytime soon and all future

dealings will be affected by this. Once trust is established, it needs to be maintained and not put at risk.

There may be times when you will have to complain or criticise about an aspect of coverage. Perhaps the journalist got some of the facts wrong, or perhaps the journalist did a story about your ARA but did not contact you, or they have reported what you said wrongly or in an incorrect context.

When making a complaint, be diplomatic. Make it clear you understand the difficulties media face with deadlines, shortages of space and so on. Be sure you can stand over your argument and, where possible and necessary, have written evidence with which you can prove your point. Every complaint should also be followed up in writing so there is a permanent record.

When dealing with the press be polite, even when it's difficult. Be reliable and prompt. Journalists are working to deadlines and appreciate it when people get back to them fast. Get a feel for each journalist's area of interest or expertise.



Handout – Golden Rules for Press Statements

1. Statements should be issued with a contact number included.
2. Statements should be typed, double spaced and concise, and preferably emailed.
3. A short, sharp and relevant attention grabbing headline must start the release.
4. The opening paragraph must provide a short clear explanation of the issue or event – The Five Ws.
5. The remainder of the release should have a quotation attributed to a spokesperson or committee member.
6. Statements should generally be as short as possible - a single page or less.
7. If it runs to more than one page, never split a paragraph over two pages.
8. If you are sending a photograph with the release, a note to this effect should be added at the end of the press release.
9. Check and re-check everything before sending.
10. Ensure that your statement arrives at the right number/email address and make a follow up phone call.

Make sure that your contact details are on the release for follow-up purposes including, where possible, email address and mobile phone number.

Photographs

If you have the resources, one of the best investments you can make for increasing media profile is a good digital camera. You don't need a top of the range model, simply one that can take pictures of sufficient quality to be printed or posted up on a website.

When dealing with the media, you should also be very aware of the need to get photographers to your events. Photographs in newspapers are as important as the story itself. Often images say more than the press statement and local papers in particular are very happy to get pictures.

In the run up to any event, speech, meeting or fundraiser, make sure that your local paper, as well as sending a journalist, sends a photographer as well. Take your own photographs as well to offer to newspapers and to use in your own local publicity.

It can greatly assist the chances of your press release being picked up if you have an interesting and relevant photograph to go with it.

Handout – How to Write a Press Release

A press release is essentially a news story. Whether it is a two line announcement of a new appointment in your organisation, or a copy of a detailed speech made by your organisation's Chairperson, it should conform to the basic rules of news writing to make it as easy as possible for a journalist to rewrite the story.

The two basic rules are: The Five Ws and The Inverted Pyramid.

The Five Ws

These are five simple questions that should be answered in the very first paragraph or couple of sentences in the press release.

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- Why?
- When?

The order is not necessarily important, but what you are trying to do is convey the maximum amount of information about what is happening to the journalist in the first couple of sentences.

Example 1: “More Gardai Needed says Ballytown Active Retirement”

Speaking at Ballytown Active Retirement's monthly meeting in the Community Hall last Wednesday Joan Smith, chairperson of the group, called on an Garda Síochána to increase their visible presence on the streets of Ballytown. Ms. Doyle made the comments while welcoming Garda Bob Mahoney, who was there to give tips to members of the Active Retirement Association on personal safety.

Who: Joan Smith, Chairperson of Ballytown Active Retirement Association

What: Calling for an increase in the number of Gardaí on the streets

Where: At Ballytown Community Hall

When: Wednesday

Why: Because Garda Mahoney was at the meeting to discuss safety

Example 2: “Ballytown Active Retirement Prepare for Trip to Tipp”

Ballytown Active Retirement Association will be heading to Tipperary on their annual Autumn Break next week. The group will head for Cashel on Monday the 14th of November and will spend the week sampling the delights of the Premier County.

Who: Ballytown Active Retirement Association

What: Will be taking a midweek break

Where: To Tipperary

When: Monday-Thursday

Why: Annual break

The Inverted Pyramid

In journalism, reporters have to write to a certain number of words. They might be told to 'write 500 words' on something. But once the story has been submitted, it might be necessary to reduce the size of it to make up for other stories or advertising.

The easiest way to do this is to take out the least important parts of the story and this is simpler to do if this information is at the end. Read a normal news story in any newspaper. The largest amount of information, and the most important information, will be at the start. As you read the article, the information becomes less and less important. Background information is inserted toward the end.

The other advantage to this is that people rarely read the entirety of an article. If you have used the inverted pyramid it means that if someone only reads the first three or four paragraphs, they probably have the most important details of the story.

If you have followed the Five Ws rule, then in the first couple of paragraphs you should have the most important information already. Next the most important supporting information, or quotes, should be included. Towards the end of the press release, additional supporting information or background material could be included.

Example of background information: Founded in 1999, Ballytown Active Retirement Association has over 30 members and meets every month in Ballytown Community Hall.



Handout – ‘Dos and Don’ts’ of interviews

- Do be polite at all times no matter what the provocation
- Do be brief and to the point
- Do use simple, easily understood language. No jargon. This is particularly relevant - would a complete stranger understand your shortened versions? i.e. ARI; ICA; LGBT; AFI. Spell it out
- Do answer questions directly
- Do remember you will generally understand the appeal and benefits of your passion/issue/ concern better than the interviewer
- Do always keep in mind that your target is the audience
- Don't allow yourself to get dragged into an argument
- Don't be afraid to correct yourself if you make a mistake
- Don't ignore questions, try and answer
- Don't let yourself get wound up or angry on air
- Don't let a reporter put words in your mouth. Correct them politely.

Remember: In an age of 24 hour news, local and community radio stations are crying out for local interest stories. Your cause/issue is one of those stories.

Handout – Radio Interviews

The key to a successful interview is the preparation beforehand. Before appearing, ask the journalist or researcher to give you an idea of the questions likely to be asked. If it is a panel discussion, make sure you know who else is going to be on as this might have implications for your preparation.

In most cases, you will be asked to speak on a particular subject. For example, you may be asked “How does X affect older people in the area?” or simply “Tell us a little bit about Active Retirement”. The first thing to decide is what your message is. Write down the key points, no more than three, you want to get across in the interview. Unless you are taking part in a live panel discussion, you will not be given a lot of time. It’s important to get the message across as quickly and clearly as you can, be it about one event or just about general activities. Most radio interviews are carried out by phone. Radio stations prefer calling landlines because there’s less chance of the call being dropped. If you don’t have access to a landline, make sure your mobile’s battery is fully charged, as you could be on hold for some time if the preceding item runs late. Always make sure that they call you, as you should not have to foot the bill for providing them with an interesting segment!

Your job is to use the opportunity you have been given to get this message to as many people as possible. You are not trying to ‘win’ an argument with the interviewer or someone else on a radio panel, but to make sure listeners get all the relevant information about your issue or cause. If someone is wrong, correct them. But don’t lose sight of why you’re there.

Put yourself in the interviewer’s shoes for a moment. What kind of follow-up questions is he or she likely to ask and how would you deal with them? Think out your responses and have a couple of ideas jotted down. Be sure of your facts and figures and rehearse the interview with fellow committee member if you can.

At all times, remember that by appearing on the radio, you are doing your local radio station a favour. Don’t be intimidated and relax, it should be great fun!

Handout – the Irish Political System

The Irish Political System has a number of distinctive characteristics* when compared with other global and European systems most of which can work to our advantage (although not all, see final point)!

- Accessible – believe it or not Ireland has one of the most accessible political systems. There are many avenues for groups to engage with the political system e.g. social partnership, task forces, Advisory Bodies, Community Forums, County Development Boards etc.
- Localised Role for Public Representatives - It's not unusual for a community group to be on first name terms with their local public representative and members of the government. Members of government must maintain links with their local area and their constituency, no matter how good their work may be at national level if they do not have a local profile they will not be re-elected.
- Poorly Resourced System: the political system in Ireland is very under resourced, T.D.s are not allocated researchers or policy advisors so most of the time they're grateful to community groups giving them information and making recommendations. What you need to keep reminding yourselves is that you have more information and have a better understanding of the situation on the ground than they do, so to govern and make correct and optimal policy decisions they need you!
- Secretive System – we are not always party to why decisions are taken, we are informed of decisions but we aren't aware of the negotiations that brought them to the final outcome.

*Adapted from B. Harvey (2002) 'Working for Change – A Guide to influencing Policy in Ireland'

Proportional Representation: Single Transferrable Vote

Elections for the Dáil are based on a model of proportional representation wherein each voter has one single transferable vote (PR-STV). This means each one vote has the potential to carry over through multiple counts, depending on the election or elimination of candidates.

How it works:

- The voter marks their ballot card in order of preference. This means putting a number one beside your favourite candidate, then a two beside your second-favourite, and so on down the ballot. You do not have to fill in all of the spaces.
- When it comes to counting, only one of your preferences is active at any one time. This starts with your number one.
- If the candidate you have marked as your number one, or first preference, is eliminated or else is elected without needing your vote (i.e., they have already met the quota, or minimum level of votes required), then attention turns to your second preference. The quota is calculated based on the number of seats and the number of valid votes cast in that constituency.
- If the candidate is still running (i.e. has not been eliminated or elected yet), then your vote for them is counted.
- If your second preference candidate has already been eliminated or elected before counting your vote, then attention turns to your third preference.
- This continues down the line until all available seats in that constituency have been filled or all your preferences have been considered.



Handout – the Irish Political System (cont.)

Commentators say it's important for people to vote for the candidates they want to be elected as their first and second choices on the ballot. However, if you want to make sure your vote travels, then in number one you need to put one of the candidates you like, but one who is likely to be either eliminated quickly or elected quickly. This way your choice transfers when their votes or surplus votes are transferred. If you vote for somebody that's in the race for the last seat as your first preference, then your vote probably won't travel.

Spoiled votes

While votes can be intentionally spoiled by writing something on the ballot sheet other than numbers in the boxes, they are sometimes accidentally spoiled by voters who repeat numbers on the ballot; you can only give one number one, one number two, one number three etc.

Sending a message

It is important to note that how you fill in your preferences can also be used to send a message to the parties and candidates. If you want to ensure a candidate cannot possibly benefit from your vote, do not give them any preference.

If a voter wants to vote against somebody and indicate their dissatisfaction, experts agree that they should put that candidate last.

If a voter puts Candidate 1 from one party as their first preference, but marks Candidate 2 from the same party as their last preference, it could indicate that although the voter supports the party, they do not support Candidate 2.

Votes can also be used to indicate preference for a coalition. If a voter wants a coalition between two particular parties, they can put those parties' candidates as the first and second preference, indicating that they support both.

Despite its complexities, the PR-SVT system is an effective and sophisticated method of voting:

It gives voters a lot more control over who they're going to vote for, as they can send very detailed messages through the system.

It's actually one of the systems that gives most voter choice and allows voters the most sophisticated means of sending a message.



Handout – Planning Your Actions

Step 1: Identify Your Issue

‘Groups must reach agreement between themselves as to what the nature of the issue is before they try and convince others’

The first key step is to clearly define and agree the issue or problem your groups wishes to lobby on:

- What is the actual problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- What are its effects?
- Who does it affect?
- Is it a local or a national issue?
- What would make the situation better?
- What change needs to happen?

Step 2: Gather Information

The second step in the process involves gathering information about the issue or problem – the more facts and detail you know about the issue the better.

- Document what you already know about the issue
- Decide if you need to consult with those that are affected by the issue
- Decide if you need to carry out research into the issue or problem
- Identify what research, reports etc already exist that could inform and support your case
- Identify and talk to other groups and organisations who are working on the same or similar issue

Step 3: Identify who holds the Power

The next step in the process is to identify who can make the changes you want, who holds the power and who can influence them.

- What or who have created this situation?
- Whose decision (or lack of) is maintaining this problem?

- Who has responsibility for the issue?
- Who else is involved?
- In what way can we make contact with them?
- Who can help you influence them?
- Who else can influence these people?

Step 4: Identify what you can do

The next step in developing your campaign is to clearly identify what actions your group can undertake, in doing so:

- Set yourself clear aims and objectives
- Clearly identify and agree the actions that the group will undertake
- Set out the agreed steps in a work plan

In identifying a plan of action for your campaign it is vital that you consider the following points;

- What resources do you have?
- What resources will you need?
- What skills do you have?
- Will your group need additional training?

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Timing – campaign that is topical for news media, hooked into other events.

Timescale – markers set for discernible progress over time.

Tone – neither shrill nor hectoring/ a request for reasonable actions to right an obviously undesirable situation/ helpful/ avoiding alienating potential support.

Realism – nothing which opponents could characterise as outlandish or unachievable.

Authoritative – well founded on research, unassailable, upholding one’s credibility.

Targeted – at whom you want to influence to do what.

Understandable – communicate clearly what is the matter and what needs to be done without assuming that everyone understands your position. Not patronising.

Co-ordinated – marrying lobbying and media work.



3.2.8 Session Eight: Support Arrangements for Civic Engagement Projects

Topic and Content:

Practical support arrangements for Civic Engagement (CE) projects

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Review the course and their choice of project
- Make practical arrangements about project development and support

Materials required

Flipchart/whiteboard, markers

Handout – Touchstone Programme Outline (from session one); Project Members' Contact Details; Project Design and Management (from session five).

Session Plan

Part A: Making a decision about project work (1 hour 15 mins)

- (a) Review of Touchstone programme (15 mins).

The facilitator briefly reviews the Touchstone programme, session by session, using the handout Touchstone Programme Outline from session one. Ensure that participants actively engage in the review by encouraging comments that elaborate on the input of the facilitator. The participants may use their learning diaries to input into the review. Point out that you will be returning to review session five (Introduction to Project Planning) in greater detail shortly.

- (b) Review of Session Five and Developing a Presentation on the Proposed Projects (30 mins)

Remind participants of the work they did in session five. Through group discussion identify the main projects proposals they have already identified by name, and record on the Flipchart. Get participants to arrange themselves into small groups to develop a short presentation for the full group on the proposed project. The aim of the presentation is to inform the full group, including participants who have not yet made a final decision about project work, of the details of the proposed project. The presentation should cover the following areas:

- Title and aim of the project

- Location of the project
- What the project hopes to achieve
- Timeframe involved and expectations of project members
- Any other important information

- (c) Presenting the Projects (approx. 5 mins per presentation) (30 mins)

A participant (or pair of participants) from each project presents the proposal to the full group. The facilitator encourages full-group discussion, and encourages questions and comments about the proposals. All participants are encouraged to ask the questions that will help them make a decision about which project(s) they wish to participate in.

Break (15 mins)

Part B: Making practical arrangements for the projects (1 hour 15 mins)

- (a) Participants form into groups to do further planning on their project. (45 mins)

If any participant is still unsure about which project they wish to join, encourage them to join a project group that best reflects their area of interest. Each group works to complete the following tasks:

1. Identify the project 'lead' who will act as point of contact for project support, for both members of the project team, and the organisation providing ongoing project support.
2. Ensure that the contact details (phone and email) of each member of the project team are collected for future communication purposes, using the handout Project Members' Contact Details. Agree how these will be shared in the group.
3. Use the handout Project Design and Management from session five to begin to further develop their project plan. Ask participants to begin to decide on the various roles that are required to progress the project, and make decisions regarding individual areas of responsibility on the project.

- (b) Each group gives a brief account to the full group of progress made on their plan (15 mins).

- (c) The facilitator gives an input on the supports available for the next period to progress the projects, and next steps on Touchstone (15 mins).

These can include: providing meeting facilities;

providing ongoing mentoring for individual projects; linking projects into other initiatives with similar areas of interest; assisting projects with researching their area of interest; providing ongoing project management skills training.

The facilitator should also outline arrangements for the Celebration Event and remind participants to put the date in their diary.

Part C: Close of course (15 mins)

The facilitator thanks participants for their contributions on the course. It may also be appropriate, if the end-of-course questionnaire is not being used, to do a brief 'round' with participants asking them to highlight an important 'learning' that they are taking with them from the course. Otherwise, ask participants to complete the questionnaire and provide any assistance that they require.

3.3 Project Support and Celebration Event

3.3.1 Ongoing Project Support

At the final session of the course participants will have been informed of the support available to them over the period allocated for project work, and the preparations required for the Celebration Event. The project work period should give projects a reasonable length of time to at least fully design the project plan, and preferably have moved into the implementation phase. Eight weeks will probably allow most projects to achieve this, and depending on the scale of the project, this time period may allow for the full implementation and evaluation of some projects. It is important that the programme facilitator is available to meet with the various projects at least twice before the Celebration Event.

For those participants who are unable to be involved in the project work phase, the Your Civic Engagement Experience – Tell Us Your Story Form (see Appendices 2 and 3) may be used to invite them to capture their thoughts and experience of real-world civic engagement activities they have been involved in previously. The learning distilled from this experience can be integrated into the celebration of civic engagement achievements at the Celebration Event.

It is important that the first project support meeting occurs relatively soon after completion of the weekly sessions and ideally within a fortnight of the completion of the course. This will ensure that the impetus and energy generated by the course is not dissipated, and that progress on project work is kept 'on track'. The session can be used to check in with the various projects and identify any additional assistance required from the programme facilitator or organisation sponsoring the Touchstone programme. For many projects, all that may be required is a venue in which to hold meetings. For others, there may be a need for ongoing mentoring support on establishing effective project structures, communications, project planning, research and so on. Participants may use the first session to form new project teams, firm up their existing project plans, and clarify any outstanding issues about the project. Participants should leave this session with a clear understanding of the next step in their project, including the date of the next project team meeting, and their role as a project member in progressing the work. It is also important that project teams understand that while they are encouraged to run each project independently and apply the skills they have learned on Touchstone, support is available should the team encounter major difficulties.

The final project support meeting, held approximately one week before the Celebration Event, should focus on project updates, and on the arrangements to present the work of the various projects at the Celebration Event. Decisions need to be made about who will present the project, and what format will be used, whether an oral presentation or an

oral presentation with visuals (e.g. a PowerPoint presentation). Participants may wish to use alternative formats depending on the experience and skills of project team members. The final session might also provide an opportunity to practice and adjust the presentations.

3.3.2 Celebration Event

The Celebration Event can be organised to consist of two separate elements, a closed first session where project teams present their work to their peers, and participants receive their certificates of completion of the Touchstone programme; and a later 'Marketplace', where organisations that support the civic engagement of older adults events in the Touchstone programme area are given an opportunity to showcase the civic engagement opportunities that are available.

The closed first session is an important element in the overall programme as it recognises the achievement of participants, and celebrates the work done on the various projects. It may be the first time that some participants have received recognition for completing an educational course since leaving school, so it might be worth considering making arrangements to reflect what happens at a conventional 'graduation' ceremony. This can add to the sense of achievement and enhanced self-confidence that many participants will feel following the completion of a well-run Touchstone programme. The atmosphere should be as relaxed as possible. In particular, participants who are presenting projects should feel comfortable and suitably well prepared.

Some projects may prefer to present their work in pairs or as a group, and this should be encouraged where appropriate. The members of the local Steering Group, where one has been established, should be invited along as the audience for the Celebration event. Where resources allow, the Celebration event can be followed by appropriate refreshments.

The purpose of the 'Marketplace' is to make programme participants aware of volunteering and other opportunities available locally that they may be of use to pursue their interest in civic engagement. It is also an opportunity to provide participants with a real-life opportunity to engage as volunteers at the event itself, at the registration desk, hosting, and generally acting as 'ambassadors' for the Touchstone programme. Relevant organisations need to be approached and invited to set up a display stand well in advance of the Celebration Event, and the background and reason for holding the event needs to be explained to them. National non-governmental organisations, such as Age & Opportunity, Active Retirement Ireland and Third Age are likely to be interested in supporting this event. Local organisations should also be approached including

the Older People's Council. The 'Marketplace' can also be promoted among other older people's networks and initiatives, where members may be interested in becoming more engaged in their communities, or may be interested in attending any other Touchstone programmes being organised.

The Celebration Event is also an opportunity to promote civic engagement through local media. It is the type of event that local broadcast and print media are often interested in, particularly if there are opportunities to photograph the proceedings and interview older people who have benefited from participation in the Touchstone programme. A well-crafted press release can make all the difference to the level of interest shown by media. This may be drafted by participants on the programme at their final project support meeting.

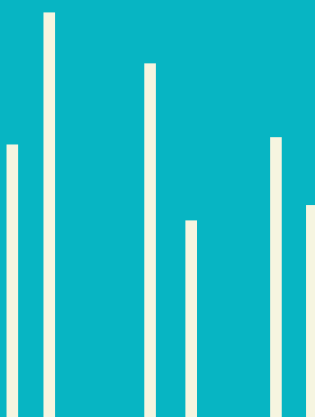
PART TWO

**TOUCHSTONE
IN GALWAY -
A CASE STUDY**



4 TOUCHSTONE IN GALWAY

In this part of the Guide, we report on the pilot Touchstone programme that was implemented in Galway during the course of 2015. Working in collaboration with the Active Ageing Partnership, the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at NUI Galway was chosen not only to develop the Touchstone programme, but also to conduct a short research project aimed at evaluating the pilot programme. To this end, and to support the Project Lead, a part-time National Coordinator/Research Associate and a full-time Local Coordinator/Research Assistant were recruited for a fixed term to the research team.



4.1 Developing the Touchstone Programme in Galway

A Local Steering Group was established to inform the development and execution of the Touchstone programme in Galway and to plan for its longer term sustainability. Steering Group members included representatives from the Galway Older Persons Council, the Galway City Partnership, the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board, Age Friendly Ireland, Galway Age Friendly programme and the Active Ageing Partnership. The Local Steering Group drafted and agreed its terms of reference at an initial meeting in the early weeks of the programme, and opted to meet on a monthly basis for the duration of the project. The agenda for meetings typically included progress updates by the research team, and plans for future phases of the local Touchstone programme. As the programme evolved, attention also turned to opportunities to deliver further Touchstone programmes in Galway city and county. Indeed, in Galway, the Local Steering Group continued to meet after the pilot programme was completed, firming up plans to deliver two further programmes during the course of 2016.

Based on previous experience of adult-education programmes, an initial decision was made to develop Touchstone as a six-week civic engagement course aimed at older adults, involving one session per week of two hours duration. Reflecting the collaborative nature of the Active Ageing Partnership, each partner organisation agreed to contribute to at least one of the six sessions, with a further contribution made by the Galway Older Persons Council. Three sessions were facilitated by the research team at the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology. The six sessions addressed the following themes: programme introduction; demographic change and the experience of ageism; societal issues and bringing about change; opportunities to become more involved in your community; media and politics and project planning; research skills and project arrangements (Appendix 4). Two optional sessions aimed at developing potential small-scale projects arising from participation in the course were scheduled to follow completion of the course. Individual facilitators provided the content for each session.

Recruitment to the pilot Touchstone programme targeted people aged 55+ living in Galway city and county. A two-page flyer, written in plain English, was created and publicised through a variety of local contacts (Appendix 1). The flyer provided information about the programme and the contact details of the Local Coordinator. At national level, the flyer was distributed to local contacts of the member organisations of the Active Ageing Partnership (Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Third Age). Locally, it was distributed by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, Community Knowledge Initiative, the Galway Age Friendly programme, University of the Third Age and COPE Galway amongst other organisations. Some groups, such as local men's sheds groups, were specifically targeted to ensure that participants from a wide range of backgrounds could be recruited. A press release was issued to local print and broadcast media. Local newspapers published information about the programme and the Project Lead was subsequently interviewed a local radio station (Galway Bay FM).

Two six-session courses ran with staggered start dates, on different days of the week and at different times of the day. One course ran on Wednesdays from 10:30-12:30 and was followed by lunch. The other ran on Tuesdays from 13.15-15:45 and began with lunch. Twenty-five participants were recruited to each course, with the organising team ensuring that the participant groups were sufficiently diverse in terms of gender and geographic location (city and county). While places were generally offered on a first-come first-served basis, some places were reserved for applicants from groups who are typically under-represented in adult education programmes. Some participants were specifically recruited because they had caring responsibilities or indicated that their social networks were limited in some way.

The recruitment strategy, in particular advertising through local print and broadcast media, generated an overwhelming – and unanticipated – response to the request for participants. Within a matter of days, 180 people had contacted the Local Touchstone Co-ordinator to request one of the 50 places on the Touchstone programme. The first 24 people to make contact were allocated a place automatically. Everyone else was placed on a holding list, pending a decision about how places were to be allocated. The remaining 26 places were subsequently allocated according to a mechanism that accounted for the timing of the initial contact but also ensured an adequate mix of course participants according to gender, geographic location, and other individual factors associated with under-representation on adult-education programmes, such as Touchstone (e.g. caring responsibilities, disabling conditions). The 130 people who were unable to secure a place on the programme were placed onto a reserve list. This group received a regret email/letter which provided information on a variety of local courses. People on the reserve list have subsequently been invited to events hosted by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology and to activities arising from Touchstone. As part of a wider Touchstone network, a number of people who were unable to secure a place on the pilot Touchstone programmes have thus been drawn into a range of civic engagement activities, pointing to the potential reach of such an initiative.

In general, as the research element of the Guide will show, participants greatly enjoyed the Touchstone programme. Their commitment to the programme was evident not only in the fact that the course sessions were well attended, but also in the way in which participants engaged in the learning experience. For example, if for some reason participants were unable to attend a session, they

typically would contact the research team in advance to let them know. If a participant missed a session without making contact, the absence was followed up by the Local Coordinator to identify the reason for the absence. This gave the research team the opportunity to identify potential barriers to participation and to actively encourage future attendance. On occasion, participants who had missed a session or who could not attend the designated session with their own course group were able to join sessions on the parallel programme so as not to miss out on the learning opportunity. In this regard, the time invested in developing a good rapport with participants from the initial point of contact to completion of the programme, proved worthwhile.

A further indication of participants' close engagement with the Touchstone programme was reflected in a desire to share with others information about civic engagement opportunities that they were aware of. On occasion, details of events, workshops and other activities were sent to the Local Coordinator for wider distribution to other participants. All participants have also been added to an electronic distribution at the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology so that they can be informed of up-coming seminars and activities.

The Touchstone programme was developed initially in Galway with a view to assessing its effectiveness in enhancing civic engagement in later life. Having the necessary resources to deliver the programme is a precondition for a successful outcome. In this regard, the pilot programme and its research component were supported financially by the Active Ageing Partnership. An outline budget for future Touchstone programmes, modelled on the Galway programme, is presented elsewhere in the Guide (Section 2.7).



4.2 Aim of the Research

In developing Touchstone in Galway, a key objective was to provide evidence concerning the impact of participation in the programme on course participants' civic engagement.

This necessitated a programme of research that could offer insights into participants' engagement in civic activities prior to joining Touchstone, their experience of the facilitated programme sessions and of any project activities that emerged, and plans for any future engagement in civic activities. The process evaluation was designed to provide a range of research tools and to yield evidence that could form a sound basis for developing future Touchstone programmes in Galway and in other parts of Ireland.

The broad aim of the research was to:

- Assess participants' civic engagement at baseline;
- Engage participants in ongoing discussion about the evolving Touchstone programme;
- Observe participants whilst they engaged in various training and capacity-building activities associated with Touchstone;
- Assess participants' civic engagement on completion of the Touchstone programme; and
- Capture participants' reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot Touchstone programme.

Reflecting these aims, the research adopted a mixed-methods design involving a range of data collection techniques.

4.3 Methodology

The research findings are based primarily on qualitative data collected from focus group interviews with participants on the two pilot Touchstone courses, and on quantitative data elicited from two questionnaire surveys of participants conducted at the beginning and end of the courses. The evaluation was supplemented by written reflections made by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology research team during the programme, and by comments and input from the national advisory group and local steering group as the programmes were being developed and implemented. The facilitators from partner organisations of the Active Ageing Partnership who facilitated various sessions on the courses also contributed on an ongoing basis to the development and evaluation of the programme.

Twenty-one programme participants, of the total number of 50 participants, took part in the focus groups. Of these, six were men and 15 women. All participants on the two courses were notified by e-mail in advance that the focus groups would take place at the end of the final session on each course, and they were invited to take part. All those who indicated a willingness to take part were notified with further details of the arrangements. To facilitate participation, focus groups were held in the same location as the course sessions (i.e. in the ILAS Building, NUI Galway), using a room adjacent to the seminar room in which the final session was held. One researcher conducted both focus group interviews. After the purpose of the interview was explained, written consent was obtained from each participant (see Appendix 5 for Focus Group Consent Form). The interviews were recorded by means of a digital audio recorder, and notes were also taken by the other two members of the research team. To start the interview, participants were asked to describe in brief any civic involvements they had previously had in their communities of residence. Participants were then asked a series of questions about their experience of civic engagement prior to the Touchstone programme, their perceptions of various aspects of the programme, and their short- and longer-term plans with regard to project work and civic engagement following the programme. To conclude, participants were asked if they wished to share any additional information that they had not had the opportunity to share up to that point (see Appendix 6 for Focus Group Interview Guide).

Forty-eight of 50 participants on the Touchstone programme completed a survey at the beginning of the course (see Appendix 7 for copy of questionnaire). The survey was conducted at the end of the first session, and the research team was on hand to assist participants, if requested. It mainly comprised a series of closed questions related to civic engagement, including: civic engagement-type activities participants were involved in over the previous 12 months; involvement in education and training; membership of different kinds of organisations; and frequency of involvement in particular activities related to civic engagement. The survey also provided space to enable participants to record any additional comments or reflections that related to civic activities that they may have been involved in.

Thirty-five participants completed the survey at the end of the course (see Appendix 8 for copy of questionnaire). The survey was conducted at the end of the final session, and once again, the research team was on hand to assist participants, if required. The survey comprised a set of questions about the programme and the future plans of participants related to civic engagement, including: the overall programme and the various sessions; session content and duration; the teaching/learning

approach applied on the course; the programme venue and facilitators; previous experience of similar programmes; personal learning outcomes; and, motivation for future involvement in civic engagement activities. The survey also provided space to enable participants to record any additional comments regarding individual sessions, ways to improve the programme, and any further reflections on personal learning on the programme.

The focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the data were analysed by the research team. The initial stage involved becoming familiar individually with the data, followed by initial coding of the data and then the identification of significant emerging themes. This was done in a collaborative manner involving all of the team members working together initially, and then meeting to discuss and agree the major themes. A descriptive analysis of quantitative data arising from the surveys which were undertaken was used to further illustrate some of the emerging themes.

The broader methodology used in developing the pilot Touchstone programme involved consultations on an ongoing basis, by way of regular meetings, with the major stakeholders at national and local level, and discussions with the facilitators from the Active Ageing Partnership organisations who worked on designing and delivering some of the sessions on the course. The National Advisory Group advised on the development of the programme content, the recruitment of participants, the project work component of the programme, the approach to be used in the evaluation of the pilot project, and the future sustainability of the programme (see Appendix 9 for list of members). This group also provided a linking mechanism for the other three Touchstone project sites, which enabled them to benefit from the early learning from the pilot project in Galway. In addition, the Local Steering Group provided advice on communications and networking opportunities for recruiting participants, alternative civic engagement opportunities locally for the large number of applicants who could not be accommodated on the two courses, the Celebration Event, and opportunities and options available in Galway to sustain Touchstone beyond the pilot stage (see Appendix 10 for list of members).

Facilitators from the partner organisations of the Active Ageing Partnership also provided content for the majority of the sessions on the Touchstone pilot courses. Because the two courses were staggered, there was also an opportunity to adjust and amend the content and processes involved on a continuous basis during the pilot. The facilitators were also involved in developing the final eight-session Touchstone course (see Part 1), using emerging findings from the research. The reflections of the research team, which were based on ongoing observation at the various sessions and ongoing informal verbal or email feedback from participants,

were also used to inform the development of the final Touchstone programme.

4.4 Findings of the Study

4.4.1 Introduction

The research findings are presented thematically as they emerged from the end-of-course focus group interviews, and are supplemented with data from the two questionnaire surveys. They provide insight into participants' experience of civic engagement prior to their involvement on the Touchstone programme, their experience of the different elements of the Touchstone programme itself, and how they perceived Touchstone would impact on their involvement in project work and on their engagement in the life of their communities following the programme. When reporting survey data, percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

4.4.2 Participant Profile

Participants on the pilot Touchstone programme in Galway broadly reflected the diversity that characterises an ageing population in Ireland. Of the 48 participants who completed the pre-course survey, 17 were men and 31 were women. Participants aged in range from 54 to 87 years, with a mean age of 65 years. Thirty-nine participants had been born in the Republic of Ireland, with nine born in other nations (primarily the United Kingdom). In comparison with the general population of older people in Ireland, participants were relatively well educated. In the general population of people aged 50 and over in Ireland, 62 per cent have at least a secondary-level education (Kamiya and Sofroniou, 2011). In our study, the corresponding proportion is 98 per cent; three-quarters of participants (75%, n=33) had achieved a third- or higher-level qualification (diploma/certificate, primary degree and postgraduate/higher degree), just under one-quarter (23%, n=10) had left school with a secondary qualification (intermediate/junior/group certificate or equivalent and leaving certificate or equivalent), and only one participant indicated having left school at primary level.

4.4.3 Participants' Experience of Civic Engagement before Touchstone

Types of Civic Engagement

When asked in the survey to describe their level of community involvement at the time of joining the Touchstone programme, the majority of participants indicated that they were in some way already actively involved in their communities before joining Touchstone. Eighteen per cent (n=8) were somewhat involved, 23 per cent (n=10) moderately involved, and 30 per cent (n=13) very involved. A substantial minority, representing 30 per cent of participants (n=13), indicated that they were not very involved in their communities. In focus group discussions, it became evident that those who were engaged in the life of their communities could often cite a period of engagement that stretched back over a lengthy

period of time, in a number of cases reaching back to individuals' formative years.

The forms of civic engagement participants were involved in varied greatly, and ranged from volunteering in local charity, church and community groups, to supporting social and political campaigns on specific issues. Participants were involved in activities focused on various issues including homelessness, community development, women's issues, enhancing the physical environment, computer literacy among older people, advocacy for older people, improving security in their community, disability issues, supporting cultural events, and addressing specific health issues such as dementia, end of life care, and physical fitness among older people.

In relation to the specific civic engagement activity of volunteering, almost three-fifths of survey participants who responded to the relevant survey question (58%, n=25) indicated volunteering at least once a week over the course of the previous 12 months. The remaining Touchstone participants (42%, n=18) volunteered less often over the course of the year, but still indicated that they had taken part in such an activity. These findings contrast markedly with those of the nationally representative TILDA study. In TILDA, 15 per cent of people aged 50 and over in Ireland had volunteered at least once a week, with 58 per cent of participants indicating that they had never volunteered (Timonen et al., 2011). This suggests that the Touchstone programme in Galway was successful in recruiting participants who were disproportionately active in the civic life of their communities.

The broad range of activities engaged in by Touchstone participants was further reflected in the kind of organisations to which they belonged (Figure 4.1). Relatively high proportions of participants belonged to voluntary organisations, religious groups, a range of community or civic groups or organisations that were not listed on the questionnaire, and tenants'/residents' or neighbourhood watch groups. Lower proportions were members of pensioners' organisations, sports clubs, environmental groups or professional organisations. No participants indicated membership of a political party.

Figure 4.1: Group/organisation Memberships of Touchstone Participants

Type of organisation	Participants belonging to organisation	
	In %	Number
Voluntary services group	35	17
Religious group	33	16
Other community or civic group	31	15
Other group or organisation (not specified)	27	13
Tenants'/residents' group or neighbourhood watch	25	12
Pensioners group/organisation	15	7
Sports club/organisation	15	7
Environmental group	10	5
Professional organisation	10	5
Irish Countrywomen's Association	8	4
Social club/working men's club	8	4
Women's group/feminist organisation	8	4
Parents'/school association	6	3
Trade union	6	3
Political party	0	0

Looking across the range of participants' memberships, just eight participants (17%) did not belong to any of the listed organisations (Figure 4.2). Forty-two per cent of participants (n=20) belonged to one or two organisations, 29 per cent (n=14) to three or four organisations, and 13 per cent (n=6) to five or more organisations.

Figure 4.2: Number of Group/organisation Memberships of Touchstone Participants

Number of group/organisation memberships	Participants belonging to specified number of groups/organisations	
	In %	Number
0	16.7	8
1	20.8	10
2	20.8	10
3	14.6	7
4	14.6	7
5 or more	12.6	6
Total	100.0	48

Many of the civic engagement activities were local and community-specific, and participants named residents' associations, community groups, parish and community councils and programmes, and school management committees located in numerous city neighbourhoods, villages, and towns in the Touchstone area. Places referred to included Knocknacarra, Renmore, Menlo, Kinvara, Claregalway, and Headford. A number of participants were engaged in multiple activities in their community:

“I am involved in the local Community Alert in -----. I am Chairperson of the local National School, and I am chairperson of the Pastoral Council. And I am involved in Galway Age Friendly Group.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

A small number of participants had been involved in activities with a social and political dimension such as campaigning on women's rights, equality issues, and protesting about cutbacks in service provision.

Participants in the focus group discussions spoke about the length of time they had been involved in civic engagement activities, and the life-course events which had impacted on their engagement. Many had made a lifetime commitment to their communities, and had over time been involved in a variety of different civic engagement activities:

“I have been involved in my local community, I suppose for twelve years with the Community Council and different groups. And probably for the past four years then, my interest is in building awareness of dementia and end of life care in the community. And that is where I am at now.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

A small number were using the Touchstone programme as an opportunity to reflect on possible areas of civic engagement to become involved in for the first time. This was sometimes triggered by a major life-course transition, such as their recent retirement or unemployment. Several had 'taken a step back' from civic engagement activities a number of years previously for various reasons, and were using the Touchstone programme as a first step in re-engaging in their communities. Some participants

referred to the importance of civic engagement in relation to their sense of who they are and how they contribute to their community.

Participants were involved in civic engagement activities which carried different levels of responsibilities. Some had direct contact with people on an individual or group basis, and were involved in activities such as tutoring computer classes, visiting older people in nursing homes, or volunteering in the local charity shop. Others had taken on roles with greater responsibility, such as chairing the local school's board of management or, in the case of one participant, sitting on the board of a national non-governmental organisation for older people.

Many participants had received training to support their involvement in civic engagement activities. This is more likely to occur in recent times rather than in the past. Previously volunteers were often expected to learn the skills required 'on the job'. One female focus group participant commented: "They accepted us in our total ignorance (in the past)." Training is also more likely to be provided by larger scale non-governmental organisations such as Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Third Age, the Samaritans, St. Vincent de Paul, or national initiatives such as Community Alert, where training capacity has been developed as these organisations and initiatives grew and training capacity was developed. Some training provision for volunteers is now accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the national body for validating courses and setting standards for awarding qualifications:

“In any sphere of activity that they take up, well if they volunteer for something they shouldn't just come in raw off the street and overnight become even a volunteer. They should be trained into aspects of the volunteering that they will be involved in. Nobody is an expert just by walking in off the street or by volunteering. It doesn't make someone good for the job.”

(Male Focus Group Participant)

The participants' experience of the training they had received was very positive. They recognised its importance in developing their knowledge and skills, and felt it was valuable when tailored to the specific requirements of the role. A number of participants stressed the importance of training, and policy and procedural support, where they were likely to

deal with traumatic situations such as suicide, or supporting the victims of assault. One participant had accumulated training experience over different activities, had become a trainer of trainers in the organisation in which she volunteered, and was now enrolled in a degree programme.

Experience of Civic Engagement before Touchstone

In the main, participants reported that their experience of civic engagement had been positive, while at the same time challenging. For example, although participants recognised that civic engagement provided a space for personal growth and development, it also required dedicating time and energy on an ongoing basis, which sometimes could be difficult. A number of participants recounted an experience of tokenistic involvement, where they felt they were invited to become engaged in a particular initiative because of their age or disability. In these cases, they felt their engagement was a 'tick the box' exercise rather than something meaningful. Others commented that you can be 'taken for granted', and that it was important to develop group leadership and ownership of particular initiatives rather than relying too much on the commitment of individuals. Other challenges faced by participants included bullying, and a lack of power or authority if they were volunteering in an organisation that also had paid employees. Some participants felt that it was important to set reasonable limits to the civic engagement role, or it could lead to unrealistic expectations and frustration in the role. Others commented on the difficulty in dealing with service bureaucracies where the role had an element of advocacy. In these circumstances people could have unrealistic expectations of what could be achieved.

Another challenge that was highlighted was the danger of initiatives being 'hi-jacked' to further the political ambitions of individuals. A number of participants had ceased their involvement in initiatives because of political interference. One participant ceased her involvement in a project because of what she perceived as ineptitude and mismanagement of the initiative.

One participant recounted a situation where an institutional response to unemployment undermined an initiative that had been built on the contribution of volunteers:

“There was a fantastic volunteer cohort of people who would undertake anything; would undertake Tidy Towns for instance. It was a great activity, and building the community centre, they actually built their own centre.

The sector was really very good until the FÁS scheme came in, and then people were employed on a FÁS scheme and were being paid money (..) they were never part of any tidy up or anything. So they were not good for the community prior to their jobs coming on where they were being paid to do it. And then the volunteers disappeared.”

(Male Focus Group Participant)

A number of participants related how they had grown in confidence over time in civic engagement activities, and how they were now better able to deal with some of the challenges outlined above. Their response now might be not to get involved in a particular civic engagement activity in the first place. They emphasised the need to know your own limitations as a volunteer, and to ensure that adequate policy, procedures and training are in place to support volunteers in their roles. They had also developed a growing awareness of the time and patience required to bring about change, and the need to believe in the value of civic engagement:

“Well you start off with all the enthusiasm in the world without really realising what the pitfalls or the objections will be, and nothing runs smoothly. But one has to take a stand and say, you know, we have got to get rid of the negative here, we have to move with the positive, we have to forget about the people who wonder how it will be done, and why it will be done, and why it wasn't done before this, and move along.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

Motivations for becoming Civically Engaged

Participants had been motivated to become engaged in their communities for a wide range of both altruistic, and sometimes more self-interested, reasons. Many participants commented about the

wish to 'bring about change'. Sometimes this was related specifically to the place in which they lived, for example, by involvement in the local Residents' Association. Here the focus was on making the area and community a better place in which to live, and was often motivated by pride in their local area. Other participants spoke about 'giving something back', especially where they felt they had led a happy and fulfilled life.

Other altruistic reasons related to improving the community for the next generation. One participant commented about the need she felt to improve things for future children with disabilities; another about the need to get the present generation of children and young people involved in civic engagement.

Some participants had been motivated by highly personal events that had happened in their lives:

“Like I said earlier, when I went to be a volunteer at the hospice, it was because my father-in-law was treated so well there that I just definitely wanted to get involved and give some of my time there. So that made me carry on with that.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

One participant referred to what she described as a 'less noble' motivation. She recounted how she had used civic engagement as a means to become more integrated as a newcomer into her community.

Participants also commented on the sense of achievement and belonging that resulted from their involvement in civic engagement activities, and how this motivated their ongoing engagement:

“Absolutely you have to feel valued. You are working alongside paid staff; you have to feel part of it. If in any way you don't (feel valued), then for me I wouldn't or couldn't do it. It was just like a wonderful community which made me want to carry on.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

Enablers and Barriers to Civic Engagement

Participants identified factors which had facilitated their involvement in civic engagement activities. A number commented that having particular personal skills was important. These included being self-

confident and having good communication skills. As one participant put it, “having the gift of the gab” enabled her involvement.

Having the time to commit to civic engagement was also an important enabler, and participants commented about how this could change over the life course. For example, one participant had more free time when her children started school, and this enabled her to become more involved in her community. Another participant was self-employed and he felt this enabled him more easily to find the time to be engaged. Retirement could also free up more time for civic engagement activities.

Participants also clearly identified the factors which could act as a barrier to civic engagement. Some of these were personal to the individual such as having caring responsibilities:

“When your family are younger you don't have that time to spend or get involved in the community.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

Having a disability could also act as a barrier to being engaged in the community:

“I would have found it as a young visually-impaired mother, when my children were very young in school, and I wasn't able to go and drive them to football matches or drive them wherever they wanted to go, you know. So I was completely outside of the box, because the mothers that could drive were able to share the cars and all the rest of it.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

Other factors included the availability of transport, and being able to afford the additional financial costs that can be associated with civic engagement:

“Attending meetings, you know, you have costs involved in all of that, and sometimes there would be a bit of pub life involved in it or whatever and you can't afford it.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

Participants also spoke about the experience of being an outsider in a community and how this could act as a barrier to civic engagement. This could be compounded in smaller rural communities by a resistance to unfamiliar ideas being introduced by anyone who was new to the area. Some participants suggested that they had experienced ageist attitudes towards older people and felt that this could act as a barrier to their civic engagement.

Participants also identified organisational and institutional barriers to civic engagement. The former included insufficient support from initiatives to sustaining the engagement of volunteers, such as failure to provide good quality training and supervision. At a broader societal level, in some circumstances, the social welfare system was seen to act as a barrier to civic engagement. For example, to be entitled to receive unemployment benefit you have to be available for work. Current welfare regulations determine that being a volunteer implies that a lack of availability for work. As such, volunteering can lead to a curtailment of benefit entitlements.

4.4.4 Experience of the Touchstone Course

Motivation and Expectations coming on the Touchstone Course

“Well for me, I was already involved (in civic engagement) and I saw Touchstone as an opportunity to gain some knowledge, to find out what other people were doing, hear views of people just as we’re doing now (in this focus group), and I suppose improve my skills.”

(Male Focus Group Participant)

This participant’s comment summarises many of the reasons why people decided to apply to join the Touchstone programme. He emphasises personal learning, the opportunity to meet people, and to share information about civic engagement in the community. Some participants wanted to learn new skills and enhance their knowledge of civic engagement. A number of these intended to bring this knowledge back to initiatives and organisations they were already involved in. Others were using Touchstone as a way to ‘re-engage’ in community activity, where for various reasons they had discontinued their involvement. Other participants had no previous experience of civic engagement and

were using Touchstone to familiarise themselves with what was involved.

Some participants wished to meet similar-minded people, with a serious interest in civic engagement activities. A number of participants applied to attend the programme because they hoped it would provide an opportunity to meet other people over 55 years of age. The language that was used to promote the course was important to these participants, because it was not specifically targeted at ‘older people’. One participant commented:

“I didn’t see the course as being anything to do with ageism or anything else. (I wanted) to come in to see and to hear, to listen to the people who are here, active participants. There’s nothing about old or elderly in it. It’s all people who are doing things within their community. That’s what I see.”

(Male Focus Group Participant)

Several participants were attracted to the programme for less high-minded reasons. One was attracted initially by the name of the programme; another wished to relieve the boredom at home and ‘do something useful with my time’. The relatively short duration of the programme was also a factor for some participants.

Participants’ Assessment of the Touchstone Course

In the end-of-course evaluation, completed by 35 of the 50 people who took part in the Touchstone programme, participants universally rated the course as being either ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Fifty-five per cent judged the course to be excellent, the remaining 45 per cent as being good. This pattern of responses was also reflected in evaluations of the individual course sessions, with only two sessions being judged ‘fair’ by two or three participants. The sessions evaluated most positively addressed the themes of the media and demographic change. Respectively, 74 per cent and 69 per cent of participants judged these sessions to be excellent.

In the two focus group discussions, it was possible to explore participants’ generally positive assessment of the Touchstone course in more depth. This element of the discussion focused on a several core issues, including the duration of the course, the adult-learning approach applied, and the action projects that followed on from the course.

While one participant commented that the short duration of the course had initially attracted her to

apply, a large number of participants thought that the six-week duration of the course was too short. They felt that the two-hour sessions did not allow sufficient time for the discussion and interaction that were a central feature of the approach. This left them with a sense of too much being done in a rushed fashion. Participants identified a number of sessions in particular, including the session on media and that exploring demographic change by way of a quiz exercise, as requiring more time than the two hours allotted. Many of them suggested that each session should have been three hours in duration, and that the number of sessions should be increased to allow for a deeper exploration of the topic areas covered:

“For me almost every session, maybe with a few exceptions, could have been done with a little more time. A little more, I won’t say leisurely, but you know the facilitators are constantly saying ‘I want to get these points finished now before we close today’. Which was fine, but we’re not doing examinations or anything else as a result.”

(Male Focus Group Participant)

Participants welcomed the adult-learning approach adopted on the course. A number contrasted this with their experience of being involved in other groups for older people:

“Sometimes active retirement groups are very good because they have large groups of people. But to me these people were not making their presence felt...any ideas that are there don’t get any further. They’re not developed, they’re not brought forward, and they don’t go into that. Perhaps it’s a lack of training. I think it is. And...to compare it with what we have seen here in the last six weeks, an awful lot of people here brought out extremely good ideas. Everybody was listened to. It was written down

on sheets of paper and charts and all that kind of stuff...But it’s not so much that that happened. It’s that the other people who didn’t bring those (ideas) forward saw that other people were having them written down, their ideas. And that actually is very expansive, and it’s also very interesting. And it has the ability to make changes, positive changes.”

(Female Focus Group Participant)

Focus group participants praised the facilitators, including some they found particularly motivating. They also felt the pace of the course was good. They commented positively on the focus the course placed on inclusivity and active participation, and welcomed the opportunities to network, and learn from one another. Participants commented on the fun they had on the course, and the ‘happy learning environment’:

“Well we did (learn) from each other. But becoming aware of (issues) is as good as learning. That’s one way of becoming aware of (issues) by virtue of our presence here. We were well treated from the time we came in. Everything was laid on you know. I think it’s fine, it’s welcoming. I would have gone to school years ago had I known it was going to be anything like this.”

(Male Focus Group Participant)

A number of participants with extensive civic engagement experience commented that they had covered some of the course content on previous programmes. One participant, while positive about the adult-learning approach, found it difficult to describe the experiential learning involved. Another would have liked more clear instruction from some of the facilitators:

“I still couldn’t describe to my husband what the course was. He knows I’m coming to NUI Galway and

that I'm doing a Touchstone course... and then I went home that evening and it was something totally different, and then I went home the next evening and it was something totally different again. But we didn't really learn, we became aware of (issues).”
(Female Focus Group Participant)

Several participants commented positively on the focus the course placed on action projects. They welcomed the time spent on identifying themes and issues of mutual interest, and felt that the project areas had evolved naturally during the course. They also commented that the projects that were agreed for development and implementation were likely to succeed because they were local, feasible and do-able.

However, some participants felt that more time should have been spent developing the group dynamics and teamwork approach required for project work. Another commented that the outcomes of the project work should also be a core part of the evaluation of Touchstone, as these would be a key indicator of the effectiveness of the course. One participant felt that it was important that support was also provided by Touchstone to participants on the various projects, as this could be vital to their success.

A number of participants also commented that they would welcome a follow-on course to Touchstone, which would develop further the many topics and issues that had been covered on the course. Some participants also noted the 'mix' of participants on the course, which included people very experienced in civic engagement activities and people who had very little formal involvement in the life of their community. Some welcomed this 'mix'; others felt that a screening process could have been used to select people with a more uniform experience of civic engagement activities. Another participant suggested that each session should be evaluated by participants as the course proceeds, rather than conducting the evaluation off the full course at its conclusion.

Figure 4.3: How Important Was it for You That the Course was Run in NUI Galway?

	Responses	
	In %	n
Very important	56	19
Moderately important	26	9
Somewhat important	9	3
Not very important	9	3
Total	100	34

When planning the Touchstone programme, consideration was given to running the course from a university site and the potential that this might act as either a facilitator of or barrier to participation. In the end-of-course evaluation, we sought to capture participants' own assessments of the University as a venue for a civic engagement programme. The majority of participants judged the fact that the course was run in NUI Galway to be important; just over four-fifths (82%) indicated that this was either very or moderately important (Figure 4.3). In terms of the venue in which course sessions took place, the new Institute for Lifecourse and Society building, 29 of the 35 people who completed the end-of-course evaluation (83%) judged this to be excellent and the remaining six people as being good. In the focus group sessions, participants also commented on the hospitality aspects of the course. They praised the airiness and light-filled nature of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society building, and the size of the rooms that were used for the course. Participants stressed the importance of well-timed comfort breaks and the need for the refreshments that were available during course sessions.

4.4.5 Participants' Plans for Civic Engagement after the Course

A central aim of the Touchstone programme was to encourage participants to become (more) involved in civic engagement activities after completing the course. In the end-of-course evaluation, we asked participants to indicate the degree to which, having completed the course, they were motivated to become more engaged in the civic life of their communities. All participants who completed the evaluation questionnaire suggested that they were in some way motivated to become more engaged; 53 per cent were 'very motivated', 41 per cent 'moderately motivated' and six per cent 'somewhat motivated' to become more engaged (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: At the End of the Course, How Motivated Are You to Become More Engaged in the Civic Life of Your Community?

	Responses	
	In %	Number
Very motivated	53	18
Moderately motivated	41	14
Somewhat motivated	6	2
Total	100	34

As previously discussed, some participants planned to return to civic engagement activities they were involved in prior to joining the Touchstone programme. They felt that the programme had renewed their sense of motivation and energy. This was reflected in the action projects that evolved out of the civic engagement programme. The projects included one that planned to explore alternative accommodation that would enable older adults to be able to 'age in place', a project on providing information to older people about various services, entitlements, and opportunities in their local community, and a local environment project.

Other participants had been motivated by Touchstone to develop new civic engagement projects. This included a project related to promoting physical fitness in later life, and another to carrying out a 'makeover' of the offices of a non-governmental organisation in Galway city. One participant was further motivated to become involved in intergenerational activities by having been invited to attend a two-day training workshop led by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology during the period of the Touchstone course. The participant had gained access to this seminar through their involvement in Touchstone.

Several participants developed projects related to their own personal experience of unemployment and ageism. One participant referred to the way in which the Touchstone course had enabled him to reflect on these experiences in a different way:

"I've now stood outside myself and looked at myself objectively, rather than emotionally at the problems I'm facing. And looking at it, you know, as a problem that isn't me if you like.

It's out there. I wouldn't have done it without the course, you know. I wouldn't have stood back and looked at myself."

(Male Focus Group Participant)

Another participant suggested that Touchstone had helped him to deal with age discrimination, and had assisted him in creating an alternative role for himself:

"I think at the moment, like only in the last few years, it is nearly like I've gone back to where I should have been when I left school and went on to college, but I don't know where that 30 or 40 years went in between. And I'm applying for jobs and it is so hard, and I think it's my age. It's soul-destroying if you let it get to you. You know you're not even getting, like I know there are jobs, I'm not even being called for (interview) and it's because of my age. And then sometimes you know too much because of your age and you're too opinionated, and they really don't want somebody that can think for themselves. So you just wonder where do you go at that stage. So really you've got to paddle your own canoe then."

(Male Focus Group Participant)

Participants commented that the Touchstone course had prepared them to take action on the projects. A number felt that the course had taught them important skills which would be of use in working on a project. It had also boosted their self-confidence, had made them more aware of their capacity to contribute to projects, and indeed had raised their awareness of the capacity of older people in general to lead a valuable life. The Touchstone course had also helped to form the teams required for collaborative action on larger-scale projects. This

was important where participants had ideas for initiatives prior to the course, but could not progress them without additional support from others.

In the focus group discussions, participants also referred to the ways in which Touchstone had helped them to make realistic choices with regard to civic engagement activities. Participants were better aware of some of the logistical constraints involved in civic engagement, including in the case of the projects emanating from Touchstone, the geographical spread of participants and how this might act as a barrier to engagement. Several participants realised that they were over-enthusiastic about becoming engaged in project work, and needed to reflect on the commitment involved and their capacity, in terms of time and energy, to be engaged effectively. A number had made the decision that they needed more information about individual projects before making any commitments. One participant commented that she wanted to be involved in a particular project, but only in a role that suited her skills and that respected the constraints on her ability to be engaged.

Reflecting the views of others who had taken part in the Touchstone course, one participant referred to the impact that the programme had on his understanding of civic engagement and the activities he could be involved in:

“There are plenty of opportunities out there. It’s really got to do with how we approach them. So a course like this provides us with the opportunity. Apart from a networking opportunity, I’ve met a lot of people from different groups and backgrounds. But it also provides us with, as you say, the springboard to drive on from here, and I think that’s positive and I have to compliment the facilitators for that.”

(Male Focus Group Participant)

5 CONCLUSION



In order to evaluate the achievements of the Touchstone programme, it is useful to revisit the aim of the programme, summarise the approach adopted to achieve this aim, and set out the rationale for adopting that particular approach. The primary aim of the Touchstone programme was to enhance the civic engagement of older adults, and to do this in a collaborative way in the context of the development of the national age-friendly city and community initiative. In order to achieve this aim, it operationalised an inclusive definition of civic engagement, which encompassed a broad spectrum of individual and collective activities, from being interested in political and civic affairs at one end of the spectrum to engaging in social and political activism at the other. The programme recognised that personal and structural barriers are present for some older people, and that these can prevent them from becoming (more) civically engaged. It determined, where possible, to support older people to overcome these barriers. The approach was not prescriptive about the type of civic engagement activities participants might wish to partake in following the course, and respected participants' choice regarding civic engagement, including when they decided not to become (more) civically engaged.

It was agreed, as part of the pilot project, to design and rollout a new education course based on the fundamental principles of adult learning and community education. These adult-learning principles emphasised the importance of learner autonomy, valued the prior experience of participants, and encouraged personal and group reflection. The course also reflected various approaches found in community education. It was designed to be used with people drawn from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. It was also designed to allow for an individual or group response to social issues identified by participants, seeking to develop the skills and knowledge needed to address these issues. The issues were identified by the participants themselves. The project-work element of the programme allowed for small-scale practical initiatives to develop. However, the skills learned on the course could also be used to initiate more radical political or social action. Whilst the course employed an adult-learning approach which emphasised flexibility and responsiveness to the interests of participants, it also identified broad learning outcomes for each session. These give us a benchmark against which we can assess the achievements of the course element of the programme.

In broad terms, the Touchstone course had a positive impact on the civic engagement of participants. As indicated in the research component of this Guide, all of the participants who provided feedback gave the course a good or excellent rating. Many commented on the knowledge they had acquired and skills they had developed that would assist them in civic engagement activities. Motivation to continue civic engagement activities or take up a civic engagement role was very high as a result of participation on the course. Newcomers to the area of civic engagement were motivated to try out various activities through the project-work phase, and participants who were more experienced in civic engagement activities felt motivated and re-energised to continue their engagement.

Many aspects of the programme, which were related to the adult learning and community education approach it adopted, can account for these positive outcomes. The course encouraged participants to reflect on their own personal experience of ageing, and critically review society's perception of ageing and of older people. It did this through discussion and interaction with peers, and facilitated participants to become aware of areas of civic engagement that they might be interested in. It also provided them with the skills to address these issues in a planned and effective manner. Through the project work, it provided an opportunity for participants to utilise their knowledge and practice these skills, to 'dip their toes' as it were into the world of civic engagement, and following critical reflection, to present the outcomes of their civic engagement activities to

a responsive audience of peers and stakeholders. These links between personal reflection, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and supported practical application in the real world of civic engagement, all enhanced the effectiveness of the Touchstone programme.

Older people also played a major role in the development of the Touchstone programme. They were not only engaged as active participants on the two courses, and encouraged to give ongoing feedback to the course facilitators and the research team, but they were also involved as members of the local steering group as active and equal partners in determining how participants should be recruited, how the course content should be designed and evaluated, and how Touchstone could be sustained in Galway on completion of the pilot period. The meaningful involvement of older adults at all stages of the development of the programme added greatly to its credibility and impact.

The programme was also enhanced by the involvement of experienced facilitators from the member organisations of the Active Ageing Partnership, who had extensive knowledge of working with groups of older adults in an empowering way. The staggered implementation of the two courses in Galway allowed for ongoing revision and amendment of the content of the various sessions by the facilitators, and ultimately, with the feedback from participants on the course, allowed for the improvement of the pilot course and the development of the course outlined in Part One.

The collaborative approach between the research team, course facilitators and older adults was also a contributory factor in the overall success of the Touchstone programme. It was used from the outset to include a wider stakeholder group who had an interest in the programme at national level and locally in Galway. The origins of the initiative lay in the decision of the Active Ageing Partnership member organisations to develop a national programme on a collaborative basis, using the human and financial resources available to them. The Active Ageing Partnership recognised early on the value in a rigorous external evaluation of the programme, and approached Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway, to partner with them on the initiative. Ongoing consultation and discussion with the partner organisations was facilitated by the research team during the development, rollout and evaluation of the programme by means of meetings of the national advisory group. The programme was amended and revised in light of advice and feedback from this group, with additional input from the local steering group, on an ongoing basis. This mobilising and engagement of a wider stakeholder group ultimately led to measures to secure the sustainability of the Touchstone programme in Galway. The local education and training board agreed to fund the future rollout of courses and to provide the facilitators

required; the city partnership organisation agreed to provide the coordination and ongoing support needed for participants to successfully complete a Touchstone programme. The focus in the future rollout of the programme locally will be, in the first place, on running the programme in a community experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in Galway city. A second programme will be run in a more rural area of County Galway.

The evaluation of the programme has also added to our knowledge of the factors that influence the motivation of older people to become civically engaged, and the supports they require to remain engaged. It delineates the challenges they sometimes face through being involved in their communities, and the enablers and barriers that impact on their civic engagement. It also provides insight into a range of factors that may motivate older adults to become involved in a programme such as Touchstone. All of these insights can inform the development of programmes similar to Touchstone, where the main emphasis is on promoting civic engagement through education and personal development.

The evaluation has also pointed out some of the limitations of the programme and of the research study itself. The participants on the course were not typical as a group compared to older people in general. They were diverse in terms of their gender and age, and were from both rural and urban backgrounds. A number had physical disabilities. All of these characteristics were controlled for at the point of recruitment. However, because participants were not systematically screened for education level or prior civic engagement experience, the educational levels of participants were higher than in the general population, and many of the participants had extensive prior experience of civic engagement. This was despite the fact that the recruitment materials were aimed at people who were not extensively engaged in their communities. The future rollout of the programme in a disadvantaged community will test how easily the approach and materials developed on the pilot study transfer to a situation where participants may have a lower level of educational attainment, and perhaps very little experience of civic engagement.

The Touchstone programme was also delivered by facilitators experienced in working with groups of older people, and by members of the research team in the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology with a background in social gerontology and research. They were familiar with the issues that usually arise and also experienced in using the adult learning and community education approach employed by the programme. Some of the sessions also required a specialist expertise, for example the session on research methods. Although the session plans and associated materials are designed to enable experienced facilitators to implement the programme, the quality of facilitation used in the

development of the programme may not always be available in the future. Provision is being made by the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology to facilitate a 'train the trainers' course locally for experienced facilitators who may not have worked previously with older adults. However, this support may be difficult to sustain as the programme is implemented in other parts of Ireland.

The evaluation of Touchstone covered the period from the start to the completion of the two pilot courses in Galway, and therefore it could not evaluate the longer term effects of the programme on the civic engagement of participants. Further research is required to examine the effects of the programme on participants in the medium and longer term. Such research could assess which, if any, of the positive effects of the programme endured over time. It could also be used to further improve the programme outlined in Part One.

Finally, drawing together insights from the pilot programme in Galway, the main elements of a successful Touchstone programme can be outlined as follows:

1. Establish a stakeholder steering group to advise and support the programme;
2. Involve older people in all stages of the programme;
3. Use a variety of methods to recruit participants, tailoring these to target groups;
4. Engage a programme co-ordinator who will support the overall programme, recruitment and evaluation process;
5. Locate a venue that is welcoming and accessible;
6. Engage facilitators who are hospitable and welcoming and who are familiar with adult learning principles;
7. Ensure that the programme is completed with a celebration of learning;
8. Collect information that can be used to evaluate the programme;
9. Ensure that the stakeholder steering group agrees final report with co-ordinator;
10. Plan for the longer term sustainability of the programme.

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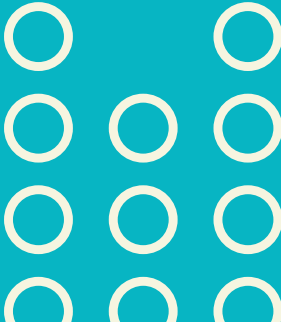
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APPENDICES



Appendix 1 – Touchstone Course Flyer

Touchstone – New course beginning in May 2015

Are you interested in becoming more actively involved in the life of your local community? Are you looking for an opportunity to help make Galway a better place for older people? Would you like to meet like-minded people who are keen to make a difference in their local community? Then, if you're aged 55 or over and living in Galway city or county, Touchstone may be right for you!

What is Touchstone?

Touchstone is a new short course which aims to develop the skills and knowledge of people who wish to play a part in helping to make their communities more age friendly. People attending the free course will develop new skills, explore a range of interesting and topical issues, carry out practical projects, try new experiences, have some fun and, hopefully, make new friends. No previous experience or qualifications are required. All we ask is that participants have experience of everyday life in Galway, an open mind and a willingness to try out new things!

How long is the course?

Touchstone runs over six weeks, with each weekly session lasting around two hours. Initially, the course will be held on two different days each week, Tuesday and Wednesday. You will attend on only one of the days and can simply choose which day suits you best. The Wednesday course will run on mornings, beginning on Wednesday, May 20th. The Tuesday course will run on afternoons, beginning on Tuesday, June 2nd. At the end of the course, and only if you wish, there will be an opportunity to apply your new knowledge and skills on a practical project over the

summer months. In September, we plan to bring people from the Tuesday and Wednesday courses together for a joint celebration event. This will be the chance to reflect on learnings from the course and from any projects that have been completed. You will have an opportunity to consider other ways of getting involved in community life in Galway in the future.

What does the course cover?

The course will be led by a team based at the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG), NUI Galway, with input from Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Third Age. Anticipated course content includes: key issues for an ageing society and how these affect older adults; how to bring about improvement and change for older people; opportunities available for older people who wish to be actively involved in community life; getting started with research; and planning and managing practical projects. Participants will also have an opportunity to attend optional sessions on using the media to support engagement in community life and using the formal political system to bring about change.



Who developed Touchstone?

Touchstone has been developed by the Active Ageing Partnership – an initiative of Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Third Age. In Galway, Touchstone also involves the cooperation of Age Friendly Ireland and the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG), NUI Galway. ICSG is leading the development and evaluation of the Touchstone programme in Galway.

Additional information

The course is free. Sessions on the Wednesday course will run on mornings from 10:30am – 12:30pm, with lunch to follow. Sessions on the Tuesday course will run on afternoons from 1:45pm – 3:45pm, with lunch available from 1pm. All sessions will be held in the new Institute for Lifecourse and Society building, NUI Galway, on the Upper Newcastle Road next to the University's park and ride carpark. You will receive a certificate of attendance when you complete the course.

What do I need to do if I'm interested?

If you are interested in joining the Touchstone course, please contact Ann Marie Atkins, Touchstone Galway Co-ordinator: telephone 086-0261408 or email annmarie.atkins@nuigalway.ie as soon as possible. She will make a note of your name, contact details (telephone number, address and email address, if you have one), and preference for the Tuesday or Wednesday course.

Places on the course are limited and will be allocated on a first come-first served basis. Early application is strongly advised. Our aim is to recruit course participants from as diverse a group as is possible. For this reason, some places may be reserved for applicants from under-represented groups.

We will send out course information for the Wednesday course by Friday the 8th of May and for the Tuesday course by Friday the 22nd of May.



Appendix 2 – Your Civic Engagement Experience

Your Civic Engagement Experience – Tell us your Story Who, What, Where, When, Why, How

Please give a short title to your civic engagement experience:

Your name:

Email Address:

Phone No:

Postal Address:

Background to your experience:

What was the issue you wanted to address?

Why did you take on the issue?

What did you want to achieve?

What did you do?

Who did you co-operate with, if anyone?

Timescales:

Funding:

Benefits: (Did you see any improvements in your community as a result of your involvement?
Please give details)

In retrospect, how do you feel about your experience? (Any interesting testimonials, comments or suggestions?)

Did you encounter any challenges / difficulties? If so, how did you overcome them?

What advice, if any, would you give to other people who might wish to address an issue similar to your own? (e.g. any lessons learned, anything you would do differently, anything you feel would help?)

Today's date:

Please return completed template by post or email by (insert date) to (insert contact details)

Appendix 3 – Your Civic Engagement Experience (Completed Example)

Your Civic Engagement Experience – Tell us your Story Who, What, Where, When, Why, How

Please give a short title to your civic engagement experience:

Secretary - Local Residents Association.

Your name:

Email Address:

Phone No:

Postal Address:

Background to your experience:

What was the issue you wanted to address?

Proper parking arrangements in the locality during busy periods such as matches, concerts etc. in area adjacent to a local sporting venue.

Why did you take on the issue?

Took on issue as a result of residents complaints.

What did you want to achieve?

Proper parking which would facilitate both residents and patrons attending events at stadium.

What did you do?

I arranged a meeting with the Chief Executive of the local County Board (GAA). I engaged with other members of the community on the matter and took their views on board. I conveyed their concerns to the relevant authorities, including the Gardai.

Who did you co-operate with, if anyone?

Other members of Residents Association and local residents.

Timescales:

Approached relevant authority in June and had an outcome in July. (Traffic marshals provided by GAA to direct traffic at relevant junctions).

Funding:

Funding was not required on this particular project but collaborated in another project that involved compiling a book on our area which required funding during 2014.

Benefits: (Did you see any improvements in your community as a result of your involvement? Please give details)

Absolutely! Parking arrangements improved as a result of mutual cooperation. Local council provided name plates and shrubbery at each entrance to our area.

In retrospect, how do you feel about your experience? (Any interesting testimonials, comments or suggestions?)

My experience has been mostly positive and reflects the benefits of becoming engaged in your community.

Did you encounter any challenges / difficulties? If so, how did you overcome them?

Of course! Getting a response from Government Agencies can be quite frustrating. However, through persistence, I believe they are willing to support local associations subject to available resources.

What advice, if any, would you give to other people who might wish to address an issue similar to your own? (e.g. any lessons learned, anything you would do differently, anything you feel would help?)

Establish who has responsibility for the particular issue that you wish to address. Make contact with them by phone and email. The latter is very important as it means a record is kept. Set a time frame for a response and contact local public representatives if necessary.

Today's date: July 2015.

Please return completed templates by post or email by **31st August 2015** to:

Post: Ann Marie Atkins, Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, Institute for Lifecourse and Society, NUI Galway, Upper Newcastle Road, Galway

Email: annmarie.atkins@nuigalway.ie

Appendix 4 – Touchstone Course Outline

Touchstone – Wednesday Course Outline

Time: 10.30am-12.30pm (followed by lunch)

Session	Date	Content	Facilitator(s)
1.	May 20th	Course Introduction and Engagement in the Life of the Community	Tom Scharf, Bernard Mc Donald and Ann Marie Atkins (ICSG)
2.	May 27th	Demographic change and the experience of ageism	Tom Scharf
3.	June 3rd	Societal issues and bringing about change	Mary Seale (Age & Opportunity)
4.	June 10th	Opportunities to become more involved in your community in Galway; what are the benefits?	Anne Dempsey (Third Age) and Joan Kavanagh (Galway's Older People's Council)
5.	June 17th	Research skills and project planning	Tom Scharf and Mary Seale
6.	June 24th	Media and politics; project arrangements	Sue Shaw (Active Retirement Ireland) and Helen Campbell (Age & Opportunity)
	July-August	Small projects in the community (optional)	Organised as individual or group projects
7.	September 16th	Review of the course and the summer projects; and Touchstone Celebration Event	Tom Scharf, Bernard Mc Donald, Ann Marie Atkins (ICSG), and partner organisations on the Touchstone programme

Appendix 5 – Focus Group Interview Consent Form

Touchstone Focus Group Interview Consent Form

Thank you for participating in this focus group study on the Touchstone programme. We will conduct a group interview with you and some fellow participants at the end of the course. This will explore your experience of the course, any learning it may have generated, and what it might mean for your future engagement in community at local, regional or national level. We will take some notes during the group conversation and audio record the discussion.

Your identity will be protected at all stages during the research. We will not share specific information that you provide with anyone not involved in this research. However, we may share general findings from this study in research presentations, reports or publications. In these cases, it will not be possible to identify you from the material.

During the group discussion, feel free to decline to answer any questions and to end your participation in the interview if you feel in any way uncomfortable. This will not affect your participation in future studies, or any of your other entitlements.

If you have questions or concerns about this consent form or about the research, please contact:

Professor Tom Scharf

Irish Centre for Social Gerontology
NUI Galway
Tel: 091- 495459
Email: thomas.scharf@nuigalway.ie

By signing this form I agree that I will participate in a focus group interview I also agree that:

- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study
- I have read this form and understand how I will be participating
- My participation in this study is completely voluntary
- I may withdraw my participation at any stage during the research without my legal rights being affected
- My name and address will be kept confidential

Participant Name Printed: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name Printed: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____



Appendix 6 – Touchstone Participant Focus Group Guide

Introduction

Before beginning the focus group, ensure that all participants understand the reason for the focus group and have signed the consent form. Describe the structure of the focus group and outline the aim of the research once again. See below:

Instructions

Questions in bold = Main questions that have to be asked

- o = Sub-questions to be asked if not covered by answer to main questions
 - = Example of probe areas to stimulate conversation
-

• **General Introduction**

- o Brief intro of facilitator(s)
- o Overview of Touchstone Project (to include AAP, national dimension, piloting in Galway, broad definition of civic engagement (CE) applied – volunteering, social or political activity/activism at local, regional or national/international level, on an individual or a group basis)
- o Purpose of focus group i.e. to explore:
 - participants' experience of CE prior to the Touchstone course
 - their views and opinions of the Touchstone course
 - their plans for CE following the Touchstone course
- o Structure and format of focus group (the number of questions to be addressed; everyone encouraged to speak but can pass; respectful contributions etc)

• **Participant Introduction**

- o Who they are (first name is fine)
- o Briefly, how they were engaged with their 'community' before joining the course

10 min

Civic Engagement before Touchstone

Explore in greater detail participants' experience of CE before coming on the course; get a sense of their understanding of CE before the course.

- **Can you tell us about your experience, if any, of engagement in the community before coming on the course?**
 - o In what 'community'?
 - o What kind of engagement did you have?
 - o Any social action or political activities?
 - o What training/support was available to you to be engaged?
 - o What commitment was involved?
 - o What was your overall experience of CE like?
- **Could you tell us about what motivated you to become engaged in community?**
 - o Any perceived benefits?
 - o Personal value system?
 - o Any difference between prior expectations/motivation and the reality of being engaged in community?
- **What kind of things enabled you, or were a barrier to becoming engaged in community?**
 - Family care commitments
 - Economic factors
 - Transport or access issues
 - Knowledge or skills needed
- **What motivated you to come on the Touchstone course?**
 - Friendship opportunity?
 - Opportunity to do something different?
 - Wanted to learn new things?
 - Wanted to make a difference?

15 min

Experience of Participation on the Touchstone course

Explore participants' experience of their participation on the course, including their prior expectations, their learning, their overall view of the course, and their ideas for improving it in the future.

[Note: it is important to acknowledge to participants that some of this has already been covered in the survey, but that this is an opportunity to expand on their written responses]

- **Can you tell us about your expectations coming on the course?**
 - Learning – knowledge and skills
 - Learning about CE opportunities
 - Connecting with like-minded people
 - Social expectations re friendship
- **Did the course meet your expectations?**
 - Learning – knowledge and skills
 - Learning about CE opportunities
 - Connecting with like-minded people
 - Social expectations regarding friendship
- **What is your overall assessment of the course?**
 - Content
 - Facilitation
 - Learning – new information and skills
 - General housekeeping – venue, comfort, refreshments
- **How would you improve the course next time it is run?**

15 min

Participants' Plans for CE after the course

We would like at this stage to turn our focus to your immediate and longer term plans for CE at the end of the six week sessions

- **Can you tell us about any plans you may have for project work over the summer months?**
 - o Details of project(s)?
 - o Why choose that project area?
 - o Individual or group project – any difference?
 - o What hope to achieve on the project(s)?
- **Can you tell us about how the planned summer project work is related to the course?**
 - o Any knowledge or skills you've learned on the course that you're going to apply?
 - o Any content on the course that sparked your interest in the topic area?
- **Can you tell us about any longer term plans you have at this stage for CE beyond the project work over the summer?**

15 min

Closing the Focus Group

- **Is there anything you'd like to add that you have not mentioned before?**

Thank everyone for their participation in the focus group

5 min

Appendix 7 – Touchstone Participant Survey (pre-course)

Touchstone – Participant Survey

As part of the Touchstone project, we are keen to find out about some of the activities that you may be involved in within your community. We would be very grateful if you could complete this short questionnaire. The information you provide will help us to plan future Touchstone courses.

Activities that you may be involved in		
Apart from Touchstone, are you currently attending or did you participate in any courses or any other education and training in the last 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you been involved in a social action project in your local area in the last 12 months? (e.g. giving unpaid help to support a community event, campaign or project; organising a community event; trying to stop something happening in your local area)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you been involved in any form of political action in the last 12 months? (e.g. attended a meeting of a trade union, a political party or political action group; attended a protest or demonstration; signed a petition)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
In the last 12 months, have you given any unpaid help or worked as a volunteer for any type of local, national or international organisation or charity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Did you vote in the last General election?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
In the last 12 months, how often, if at all, did you give any unpaid help or work as a volunteer for any type of local, national or international organisation or charity?	<input type="checkbox"/> On 3 or more days a week <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a week <input type="checkbox"/> Once a week <input type="checkbox"/> Once a fortnight <input type="checkbox"/> At least once a month <input type="checkbox"/> Quite often but not regularly <input type="checkbox"/> Just a few times <input type="checkbox"/> One-off activity <input type="checkbox"/> You helped or worked on a seasonal basis	

In the last 12 months, how often, if at all, did you attend any classes or lectures?

- On 3 or more days a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Once a fortnight
- At least once a month
- Quite often but not regularly
- Just a few times
- One-off activity

Are you currently a member of any of the following kinds of organisations? (Please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political party | <input type="checkbox"/> Trade union |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental group | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents'/School Association |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tenants'/Residents' Group or Neighbourhood Watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious group or church organisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary services group | <input type="checkbox"/> Pensioners group/organisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scouts/Guides organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional organisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other community or civic group | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Club/Working men's club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports Club/organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish Countrywomen's Association |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Group/Feminist Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other group or organisation |

How would you describe your level of community involvement?

- Very involved
- Moderately involved
- Somewhat involved
- Not very involved
- Don't know

How often, if at all, do you do any of the following activities?

Read a newspaper?

Every day Several times a week Several times a month Never

Watch the news on TV?

Every day Several times a week Several times a month Never

Read the news on-line?

Every day Several times a week Several times a month Never

Listen to the news on the radio?

Every day Several times a week Several times a month Never

Personally read "blogs" on the Internet that deal with political issues?

Every day Several times a week Several times a month Never

Discuss politics or social issues with your friends?

Every day Several times a week Several times a month Never

Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?

Every day Several times a week Several times a month Never

Demographic questions

Are you?

Male

Female

In which month were you born?

In which year were you born?

Were you born in the Republic of Ireland?

Yes

No

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some primary (not complete)

Primary or equivalent

Intermediate/junior/ group certificate or equivalent

Leaving certificate or equivalent

Diploma/certificate

Primary degree

Postgraduate/higher degree

Please use this space to write down any additional comments or reflections that relate to civic activities that you may be involved in.

Thank you very much for completing this survey!



Appendix 8 – Touchstone Participant Survey (post-course)

Touchstone Participant Evaluation Form

As part of the Touchstone project, we are keen to find out about your experience of the course. We would be very grateful if you could complete this short questionnaire. The information you provide will help us to plan future Touchstone courses.

About the Touchstone Course

1. How would you rate the overall course?

(Please tick one)

Excellent Good Fair Poor

2. How would you rate the individual sessions on the course?

(Please tick one box for each session)

Session	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Course Introduction and Engagement in the Life of the Community (Tom Scharf and Bernard McDonald)				
2. Demographic change and the experience of ageism (Tom Scharf)				
3. Societal issues and bringing about change (Mary Seale)				
4. Opportunities to become more involved in your community in Galway; what are the benefits? (Anne Dempsey and Joan Kavanagh)				
5. Project planning; media and politics; (Mary Seale and Sue Shaw)				
6. Research skills; project arrangements (Tom Scharf and Bernard McDonald)				

3. Any additional comments about the individual sessions:

4. Please indicate your view on each of the following statements about the course.

(Please tick one box for each statement)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The course met my expectations					
The content was well organised and easy to follow					
The content was interesting					
Participation and interaction were encouraged by the facilitators					
The duration of each of the sessions was just right					
The pace at which each of the sessions took place was good					
The size of the group was just right					
The balance of delivery between presentation and group discussion was good					
The balance on the course between reflection/discussion and taking action (through the project work) was good					

5. How would you rate the facilitators (people leading the sessions on the course)?

Excellent Good Fair Poor

6. How would you rate the venue for the course?

Excellent Good Fair Poor

7. How important was it for you that the course was run in NUI Galway

Very important Moderately important Somewhat important
 Not very important Don't know

8. Do you have any additional comments about how the course could be improved?

About your learning on the Touchstone Course

9. Have you ever participated in a course like this before?

Yes No

If yes, what was the title of that course?

10. What were the three main 'lessons' you learned on the Touchstone course?

11. At the end of the course, how motivated are you to become more engaged in the civic life of your community?

Very motivated Moderately motivated Somewhat motivated
 Not very motivated Don't know



Appendix 9 – Membership of Touchstone National Advisory Group

Members of the Touchstone National Advisory Group

Ann Marie Atkins (Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway)

Áine Brady (Third Age)

Helen Campbell (Age & Opportunity)

Liam Carey (Third Age)

Anne Dempsey (Third Age)

Seán Dillon (Age & Opportunity)

Michael Foley (Age & Opportunity)

Maureen Kavanagh (Active Retirement Ireland)

Bernard McDonald (Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway)

Maurice O'Connell (Active Ageing Partnership)

Hugh O'Connor (Age Friendly Ireland)

Thomas Scharf (Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway)

Sue Shaw (Active Retirement Ireland)

Karen Smyth (Age & Opportunity)

Appendix 10 – Membership of Touchstone Local Steering Group

Members of the Touchstone Local Steering Group

Ann Marie Atkins, (Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway)

Declan Brassil (Galway City Partnership)

Bernie Donnellan (Galway County Council)

Sile Halifax (Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board)

Alison Jones (Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board)

Joan Kavanagh (Galway Older Persons Council)

Bernard McDonald (Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway)

Evelyn Moran (Galway Older Persons Council)

Vernice Murray (Galway City Partnership)

Eithne Nic Dhonnchadha (Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board)

Maurice O'Connell (Active Ageing Partnership)

Thomas Scharf (Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway)

Sarah Wetherald (Age Friendly Ireland)

Notes

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