

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM THITHÍOCHT, PLEANÁIL AGUS RIALTAS ÁITIÚIL

JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dé Máirt, 17 Aibreán 2018

Tuesday, 17 April 2018

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 12 p.m.

The Joint Committee met at 12 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	Seanadóirí / Senators
Pat Casey,	Victor Boyhan,
Fergus O'Dowd,	Jennifer Murnane O'Connor.
Eoin Ó Broin.	

Teachta / Deputy Maria Bailey sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Business of Joint Committee

Chairman: We are in public session. No apologies have been received. I propose we go into private session to deal with some housekeeping matters.

The joint committee went into private session at 12.07 p.m. and resumed in public session at 12.20 p.m.

Housing for Older People: Discussion

Chairman: At the request of the broadcasting and recording services, members and visitors in the Public Gallery are requested to ensure that for the duration of the meeting their mobile telephones are turned off completely or switched to airplane, safe or flight mode, depending on their device. It is not sufficient to put their phones on silent mode as this will maintain the level of interference with the broadcasting system.

No. 3 on the agenda is housing for older people. On behalf of the committee I welcome Ms Catherine McGuigan and Mr. Barry Lynch, Age Friendly Ireland; Mr. Seán Moynihan and Mr. Pat Doherty, ALONE; Mr. Rodd Bond and Dr. Lucia Carragher, NetwellCASALA; and Ms Corona Joyce and Mr. Gerard Scully, Age Action.

Before we begin I wish to draw attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(f) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of the evidence they are to give to the committee. If, however, they are directed to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. Witnesses will have four minutes to make their opening statements. I invite Ms Catherine McGuigan to make her opening statement.

Ms Catherine McGuigan: I shall set a little bit of context in the few minutes allocated to me. The Age Friendly Ireland programme, as members will probably be aware, over the past eight to nine years has provided a network of age-friendly county and city programmes in order to consider the ageing demographic and respond to the needs of older people. The first programme started in County Louth and, to date, there are 31 age-friendly programmes located across the country. The Age Friendly Ireland programme is hosted by Meath County Council as part of shared services on an interim basis and it is co-ordinating that response. The committee will have been given a copy of my presentation in advance. The members can see on the screens in front of them a snapshot of some of the initiatives that have been responsive to the current needs of older people.

Over the past nine years we have consulted about 20,000 older people. We have also carried out a national baseline and I will outline a few statistics in a minute or two. I wish to briefly

state that there are two kinds of needs when it comes to housing for older people. First, the current needs of the ageing demographic. They face challenges like retrospective builds in terms of housing and customising or adapting houses to their needs. Second, there are future generations. If we are serious about providing housing for older people then we must consider sustainability and lifetime adaptability so that now, with the forthcoming tranche of housing, we can put universality into them. That would mean houses would no longer need to be retrospectively downsized to meet the needs of an ageing population. The members will be pleased to hear from me and all of my colleagues in other organisations that there are loads of opportunities and examples of how that can happen across the country.

We have an ageing population. Older people want to remain in their own homes and have access to services. They do not want to transition into residential care unnecessarily. They want to transition and for houses to be adapted to their needs as they age. Such a viewpoint is substantiated by our national baseline. We conducted such research with the Department of Health and it was called the healthy and positive ageing baseline. It was carried across 21 local authority areas. The initiative was conducted in partnership with the Health Service Executive, HSE, Age Friendly Ireland, the Department of Health and Atlantic Philanthropies. The fieldwork was carried out, and we developed 76 indicators, which are aligned to the national positive ageing strategy and the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

I have given a snapshot but I can supply the committee with a full version of the composite report, which is national baseline data. In terms of current issues, some people are empty nesters and want to downsize. There are problems with housing maintenance and housing conditions. There are many services within the community, such as care and repair schemes and befriending programmes, that can respond to those issues but, critically, there are still many people who do not know what is available to them. Even fuel poverty and the like are continuing issues.

The next slide concerns housing attitudes and it substantiates what I have said. What do older people in Ireland want? After consulting with this number of people and the national baseline, older people want to remain living in their own homes and as part of their communities, but not necessarily in their current housing conditions. That could be because they can no longer get up the stairs or there might be obstacles to that. The top thing they do not want to do is transition into residential care or even to move in with family. They want to retain their independence for as long as possible. They would like financial help with their bills. Some older people were not able to keep their house warm in the past 12 months and some of them had to go without heating. They would be people who are living in three or four bedroom houses. They need to live in appropriate accommodation that is warm. We have some great examples and, as I explained to the clerk to the committee, we have examples that are currently being devised in a policy document. There is Colivet Court in Limerick, the Great Northern Haven, which members will hear about today, and Nás na Ríogh Housing Association. There are many different housing case studies which members can examine after the meeting.

The next slide is the four components of housing. When one thinks of housing, one thinks of bricks and mortar but it is so much more than that. Obviously, there are the physical things and the opportunity for the committee is to look at lifetime adaptability, housing options and retrospectively to look at things such as the housing adaptation grants. However, there is also access to clinical care and to social services, whether it is a visit to the library, a home help or local transportation. The emerging aspect is technological. We need to look at technology in the home to be able to make our homes more sustainable.

I will finish up in terms of the policy context. From our perspective, the Age Friendly Ireland programme is hosted by local government and works with all the key Departments. There are two actions in the Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. One is that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health would work on a joint draft policy. We were invited to participate in that and we were able to provide our housing research which looks at all the core components of good housing - location, place making, use of brown field sites and housing allocations. We are looking at the broader context of not just social housing, but housing for everybody, including owner-occupier. That policy is being developed and I understand it will be published and launched shortly.

We provide housing and public realm training and have rolled it out to architects, engineers and planners across the 31 local authorities. We will continue to roll that out to approved housing bodies and private developers. It is a priority for the future that people are made aware of what the challenges are and, perhaps, to debunk the myth that it is hugely more costly. It will cost more to build one's house in an age friendly way if one wants it to be sustainable, but it does not have to be so much that it would deter people. It is certainly more costly not to do it. That is the argument. We have also provided recommendations for county development plans across the 31 local authorities and we have worked with the national planning framework to ensure the principles and awareness of the ageing demographic are translated into that framework.

That is an overview of some of the resources we have developed over the past few years. I sent them to the clerk of the committee to be circulated to the members. The age friendly principle is based on the fact that if one designs for the young, one excludes the old, and if one designs for the old, one includes everybody. Sustainable and inclusive communities and housing options are key to building a sustainable, age friendly country.

Mr. Seán Moynihan: I thank the committee for the invitation to today's meeting. ALONE supports older people to age at home. There are many hidden issues with regard to housing for older people. Housing is vital to meet the need of people to remain independent. One in five older people need support to age at home, regardless of house ownership or house type. We believe that all models will need some support structures and technology to enable people to age at home. Housing linked to community support is absolutely vital to reduce the pressure on residential nursing home care and acute hospital care and to allow older people to remain at home, where they want to be. Housing for older people is already a significant problem, however. More than one in eight older people has housing problems, and of the last 1,400 cases of older people who have come to us for support between 70 and 90 years of age, housing is the second biggest issue. At the back of our short submission we have outlined what we believe is a spectrum of housing, the different types of housing that are available. There is no one size that fits all. All options have a role to play but to varying degrees. Up and down the country there are some marvellous examples of housing that have been developed, usually by local champions, by people putting in great efforts and bringing people together. We need to develop models that are transferable, scalable, can work in both urban and rural settings and are designed to age-friendly principles.

From our work we have come up with recommendations as a result of the stories and challenges of the people who come to us. Our proposals include: to review and update Rebuilding Ireland to reflect the needs of an ageing Ireland; to provide funding towards developing new age-friendly models of housing; to provide more public housing for older people requiring varying levels of support; to provide grant funding for housing adaptation to meet demand in a consistent and user-friendly manner; to implement long-term renting options; and to update the

pension scheme in the light of reduced ownership because our whole pension scheme is based on house ownership, which is decreasing. On house ownership, people may not realise that more than half of older people have housing condition problems. The housing adaptation grant, HAG, is run differently in every county, is complex and is not funded to meet demand. We feel a key thing that could be done, relatively quickly, is to address these issues to support people to remain in their own homes.

House ownership is dropping at approximately 1% each year. This means several thousand older people are now retiring into private rented accommodation. Private rented accommodation is not suited to many older people because, ultimately and legitimately, one is only 224 days away from becoming homeless. When older people lose their homes, they lose their community, their friends, their support and everything around them. They cannot compete on fixed income in a rising rent market. Our proposal to address that is to have long-term leases to provide greater security. More public housing for older people should be provided so that people who are on the housing list or have been renting all of their lives could possibly buy in to that. There are other elements along the continuum of shared houses, retirement villages, and downsizings. While these have a role to play, we believe only a small percentage of people will go into these. They could require a large amount of effort and a large amount of money. Without alternative housing options, if one does decide to downsize, where is one going to go? Where is one going to go in one's own community? We need to move away from downsizing a little bit, as an immediate solution. Maybe it is a long-term solution on the basis of having housing choices for older people and they will choose to downsize.

On approved housing bodies, under Rebuilding Ireland, there is only one location for housing with on-site support. The demand for this type of housing is in the thousands. Currently, there is one location. On the basis that, by 2022, we are going to be 600 nursing home beds short, we will therefore need to create alternatives, as other countries have. That leads us to the proposal that we need to review Rebuilding Ireland, to reflect an ageing Ireland that takes account of the support that older people require on and off site.

As we look at that spectrum, our work in ALONE is to try to work out the demand, by community health care organisation CHO area, and by council area for all these different types of houses. We hope by the middle of June to be in a position to produce those demand figures so we can then start discussing how we meet the demand for all of those different areas. As soon as we have that work finished we will share it with the committee.

Chairman: I now want to call on Ms Joyce for her opening statement.

Ms Corona Joyce: Thank you. We are very grateful to have the opportunity to meet with the committee this afternoon.

Both the programme for partnership Government and national positive ageing strategy contain commitments to enable people to live in their own homes for longer, when deemed appropriate. Despite these commitments we have developed a system that seems to treat home supports more as a way to empty acute hospital beds than to enable an older person to age at home with dignity and independence, and for the accommodation to be person-centred and meet the person's changing needs.

To meet these commitments it is essential that the housing aid for older people scheme, as well as the other programmes under the housing adaption grant, continues to be adequately resourced.

As indicated in table 1 in our submission, from 2010 to 2016 great variance can be seen in the overall funding to the scheme, the number of payments made and the average grant amount. Between 2010 and 2013, funding for the scheme fell sharply, as did the number of grants. At the start of 2014, a number of changes were introduced to the eligibility criteria for the scheme. These included a reduction in the size of the maximum grant available, changes in the income bands and an increase in the age for eligibility from 60 to 66 years. The Government argued these changes were necessary to target the funding towards those most in need.

It is important for members to recall that the terms of reference for the 2013 review that led to these changes explicitly included the then recessionary economic climate and shrinking budget as the context. Those circumstances no longer exist and consequently, the scheme needs to be re-examined in the light of the current economic climate. The impact of these changes has meant that the poorest of older people now receive a reduced maximum grant while being expected to pay for a greater percentage of the work. A household, for example, with a yearly income of less than €30,000 may be eligible for a maximum grant of €8,000 or 95% of the cost of the works to be carried out, whichever is greater. At the maximum grant and percentage rate, this low-income household will need to find funding to match €421. This represents a substantial burden for someone reliant on a State pension. While the level of funding increased by 20% in 2014, the number of grants awarded increased by more than 100%. This indicates that the funding is being spread more thinly. By 2016, year on year there was an increase in overall funding.

Age Action feels strongly that the scheme is not adequately resourced. We ask that the changes introduced to the scheme in January 2014 be reversed to ensure better access to grants for disadvantaged older people. While the additional €5 million announced by the Government in budget 2018 for overall housing adaptation grants is welcome, there is no clarity yet as to how this will be spent across the three funding programmes. In our budget 2018 proposals we sought an increase of €18 million to restore funding for housing aid for older people. In the context of reversing the 2014 changes, which would create greater demand for the grant, we believe this is still a fair and sensible proposal.

Calls to Age Action's helpline frequently highlight inconsistencies in the implementation of these grants. Many of the callers to the helpline find the complexity of the application process difficult to navigate. They experience delays in assessment and approval. This can be very stressful and upsetting as, in our experience, most applications are made in emergency or crisis situations. Different local authorities interpret the rules of the various schemes in different ways. Age Action calls for greater clarity and consistency in the administration of the schemes and we would welcome a review of the schemes.

The current policy of prioritising the provision of housing adaption grants to facilitate discharge from hospitals on an emergency basis means that older people in hospital can access them more easily than those living in the community. This makes it harder for older people in the community - such as those with non-emergency needs - to have their care needs met. Enabling older people to remain at home for longer through investment in these schemes can deliver savings by ensuring that fewer older people require preventable hospitalisation or residential care. We need to facilitate community living, mitigate preventable hospitalisation and, if deemed suitable, provide an alternative to nursing homes admittances for those already in hospital and awaiting discharge.

Mr. Rodd Bond: I thank the Chairman and members for extending to me the opportunity to appear before the committee.

Last year, as part of its sustainable development goals, SDGs, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN-DESA, brought forward the older persons 2030 agenda for sustainable development. While the achievement of many of the SDGs are supported and reinforced by housing policies and actions, we see goal 11, to “Make cities, communities, and human settlements [age] inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and goal 3, to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” as the relevant overarching global, European and national policy objectives before us. Regardless of the varying pressures and dynamics of ageing we see between urban and rural Ireland, there is an imperative to align our efforts towards more smart, sustainable and inclusive development for all ages. There are three transpositions, or prospective shifts to viewing the topic that I would like to make, that may open up a solution space in the landscape before us.

The first transposition is to reframe the challenge, to move from meeting the needs of housing for older persons to meeting the housing needs of persons as they age. Housing for older people is not a segmented cohort problem. Ageing, and associated age-related decline in functioning is a universal reality facing us all. We need universal, mainstream and inclusive responses that, over time, will make much of our housing stock adaptive and fit for purpose, for all of us, in an ageing society.

The second transposition is to reframe the challenge and to move from meeting the housing needs of persons as they age to meeting the home needs for persons as they age. The term “home” or “housing” risks limiting our considerations to bricks and mortar, and to a transactional view of place as primarily property and financial assets. While these are very important, they do risk diminishing the value, meaning and sense of home, of place and of belonging that is so vital to our physical and spiritual well-being. Along with protection and shelter, home encompasses the locus of our social connectedness, attachment, neighbourhood, family, our sense of security and identity. Location - the sense of adjacency, density, amenity and quality, both physical and environmental - and desire - our attachment to place, community and intergenerational solidarity - are all interwoven elements in this rich milieu of home and place. These motivations do not fade as we age. They intensify.

The third transposition I would like to make to reframe the challenge is to move from meeting the home needs of persons as they age to empowering persons to meet their home needs as we age. At the heart of this issue are the questions: whose problem is it, what mechanisms and choices are available to us to address it, and what is the price of failure, or better, the value of success? These are interconnected, but we do know that the price of failure is a latter life of poor quality; reduced participation, isolation, and reduced health and well-being, and poor overall system and service effectiveness; and, an over-reliance on long-term residential nursing care, avoidable hospital admissions and readmissions, and slower discharges. Empowerment is a complex mix of rights, responsibilities, capabilities and choices, energised by both awareness and desire. While there is innovation in the public sector, today there is very little evidence that mainstream housing market mechanisms have brought forward many appropriate options to allow currently unaware persons to exercise either their choices or their responsibilities to plan and act for more successful ageing.

Today, there is no market functioning at scale that makes available universal homes in sustainable neighbourhoods. Empowering persons to meet their home needs as they age is a societal responsibility, and I suggest that the housing market needs to be stimulated, or incentivised, to engage in greater innovation to address and seed initial supply. With the right mix of partners, risks could be spread across multiple stakeholders across the value chain, and for a defined

period of time, in a range of public-private pilot engagements, to offer choice, test demand and evaluate socioeconomic impact. Such housing and health policy experimentation needs to be holistic, to address planning, design, support service, digital and financial innovation.

With an age-dependency ratio approaching 1:2 by 2060, this is more than a specialised housing problem for a cohort. It requires a paradigm shift in how we collectively envisage and approach the challenge of our housing stock for current and future generations. It will require aware citizens with the opportunities and freedoms to respond, plan and choose their solutions for their futures. I think right now it requires public policy experimentation to create the conditions to foster innovation so that citizens can exercise choices to age in place soon, and into the future.

Chairman: I call Deputy O'Dowd. The committee normally does five minutes of questions, five minutes of answers and there is always a bit of leniency.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I welcome the witnesses. I know Mr. Bond from the great work he is doing in Dundalk and the Great Northern Haven, which is an example of excellent technology use in a community that lives as independently as they do down there. It is very worthwhile and I believe it is a model for all future housing for older people. I would also like to say that I have been concerned about all of these issues for many years. My particular concern is that the problem with the housing adaptation grant as I understand it, is that it depends on what the local authority budget actually is.

It is proportional to funding that comes from the local authority which the State quite often matches. In County Louth we found that we were about €1 million less than we should have been about a year ago. The reason was that the economics of the council were significantly challenged by properties and land bought at the height of the boom that had become worthless, for which the loans had to be serviced. On the point the witness is making about the housing adaptation grant being universally available, we should change the fact that councils have to give funding at all. Let the State fund it entirely. Older people suffer when the council budget does not include them in their list of needs. We found that people would be waiting a year to get their grant. The people who were getting it were those who were most ill, for example with cancer or significant heart disease, and people who would have been in institutional care. There is a huge job of work to be done there.

I feel extremely strongly that fair deal should only be used for high-dependency patients. Our society should exist in such a way that people only go into a nursing home when they are high-dependency patients and are practically bed-bound. People should be able to live in their communities and have their housing adapted as their needs develop. If they need to move from a home they might go into what used to be called sheltered housing - I do not know what the correct in-phrase is for that now - where they can live independently but where a nurse or community worker comes in to see if Johnny is okay and if Mary took her tablets or whatever. We need to make sure that people stay in their community as long as possible and that we support them in doing so.

Yesterday, I had a call from a lady whose mother had been looking after her father. Both parents are in their 80s and the mother unfortunately had a very serious fall. She is now in an acute hospital and there is nobody to look after the father. He is independent in that he can live at home but he needs to be physically moved because he is in a wheelchair. Both of them could end up in long-term care if the system is not in place to look after them. I know the home care packages are being significantly increased. We should establish a principle of citizens living

independently in the home, with a housing adaptation grant to physically look after them and the home care packages to meet their bodily needs in terms of care, to keep them out of these nursing homes. We have about 21,000 or 22,000 people in nursing homes. A lot of them, to my knowledge, have a very poor life expectancy once they go in there. The life expectancy is much longer if they live in the community. That is a fact. The care is much better in the community; I believe that is a fact, too.

My wonderful constituency covers bits of counties Louth and Meath. I find that a constituent in County Louth can get a specially adapted wheelchair in their home or nursing home if they need it. However, a constituent in County Meath will never get one in their nursing home but will get it in their private home. There are significant disadvantages depending on what county one lives in. The care and support that is needed to maintain people in their homes is not universal across all of our administrations.

The points the witnesses have made have been very helpful to me. I agree with what they are saying, and what they are saying is what I believe myself. By their campaigning, their research and by being here today, they encourage all of us to fight a better fight. I am probably the youngest person here today and, thank God, I am very mobile. We all need to think about this as we get older. We are going to live longer. Most people born today are going to be 100 when they eventually say goodbye. Imagine how powerful that would be for Deputies in 20 or 30 years time. It is about caring for people, being aware and driving the agenda, not standing back. We must fight the bureaucracy. Getting through that damn bureaucracy is the biggest problem people have to face. It changes from county to county. I found that the Department had loads of money available, certainly for the housing adaptation grant, but councils were not applying for it. Although I do not have the response to hand, I tabled a parliamentary question seeking a comparison of the funding for housing adaptation grants given to all local authorities. It is worth looking at that because some counties really fast-track the money they provide while others do not, which is not acceptable.

Mr. Seán Moynihan: Members, from their constituency experience, grasp what we are all trying to achieve. I take the points Deputy O'Dowd makes about the adaptation grant and the desirability of having centralised guidelines rather than administering the system differently everywhere. The process is very complex and difficult. We have staff members who go out and sit with older people, fill out the forms, bring in architects and do all the work for them but the forms are continually returned with requests for a bit more of this or that. There is no consistency nationwide in how it is administered and it is very hard to do. A huge amount of effort has gone into making County Louth an outlier and a leader among age-friendly cities and counties. In tandem with our colleagues in Age Action, Age Friendly Ireland and others, we are trying to make possible the implementation of the national positive ageing strategy, which links all the Departments and creates a bias towards helping people to age at home. There has been a huge increase in the number of people who approach us because they have retired into privately-rented accommodation. As houses get sold up, we will have to come up with some solution to this or an awful lot of constituents could be in very bad nick and seeking housing in their 70s and 80s.

Ms Catherine McGuigan: I know about the great work Deputy O'Dowd has been involved with in County Louth, having worked there from the early stages of this issue in 2009, when we really did not know what future we were looking at regarding housing. I will call on my colleague Mr. Lynch, as the director of housing in Meath County Council, to speak about the overall budget for the housing adaptation grant but the difficulty is exactly as we say. Generally, a

critical incident occurs and then a fast-track application must become a priority one. It is rushed through and then priorities two and three, that is, the people who are trying to plan for ageing, have to wait until they have a bad fall before something happens. That is the biggest difficulty with the grant. We should be planning for those needs. We are doing a lot of work with the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design on features that should be built into housing. These are often very simple things, like a downstairs wet-room, the removal of door saddles or proper door handles, which can make a house age-proof and can be preventative. I agree with Deputy O'Dowd that the jargon around the application forms has been a bit of a burden for people. There has also been an issue around waiting times for occupational therapists to sign off. The Department has looked at that but there has not been consistency. The Department has carried out a review of the design of the form in order that it can be more easily accessible for people who may have literacy issues. I agree that a more consistent pattern is needed. Our long-term goal is a situation in which we do not need to retrospectively fix houses because they all will be age-proofed. Maybe Mr. Lynch would like to give his perspective on the grant.

Mr. Barry Lynch: The overall initial allocation which was announced last year by the then Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Deputy Coveney, was of the order of €60 million. The local authorities have to find one fifth of that, which is €12 million. Fortunately, Meath County Council was able to fund that. We received an extra allocation of €1.9 million in total, for which we had to bring almost €400,000 into play. Fortunately our circumstances permitted it. However, I agree with Deputy O'Dowd's comment that 100% funding is required, because it is difficult, particularly for the smaller local authorities, to come up with matching funding. As my colleague, Ms McGuigan, has said, the €60 million represents the cost of not using the proper design in housing in the first place. Because of this, we have to deal with emergency situations. The allocation is vital money in that it can allow people to be discharged from hospital and return to their own homes. The money is needed but we also need a system which will allow us to bring down the need for it over time. We need better design standards so that people are not faced with a situation where their houses are no longer suitable for their purposes. I agree with the suggestion that 100% funding should be available. The scheme was passed from the HSE to local authorities a number of years ago and the biggest issue now is the matched funding that local authorities have to come up with.

Ms Corona Joyce: We agree with Deputy O'Dowd and our colleagues that is fair for older people to have clarity regarding the application process and the timescale for getting decisions. Mr. Scully is from our helpline and he will have more practical experience of this.

Mr. Gerard Scully: I agree with Deputy O'Dowd. I worry about centralised funding when I look at the centralised processing of medical cards and the bureaucracy involved in that, which has meant that economies of scale did not materialise. If we were to go down that road, it would have to be properly funded and resourced. As regards 100% funding to local authorities, if it was possible to segregate two separate strands of funding, namely, emergency and proactive funding, it could be a solution. We would need to look at the level of emergency funding required over the years and take it from there.

Mr. Rodd Bond: I agree with the need to focus on making the home adaptation programme more universal and inclusive. The challenge will be in the fact that there will be greater demand for a resource that will not be able to grow at the rate of that demand, so we need to address it. If our mainstream housing stock is better positioned, our adaptation need could be reduced and we may be able to get more value for the adaptation grant by spreading it out a bit more.

We need greater awareness. Many of our adaptations come at a point of crisis when we

realise there is pressure. Perhaps we could raise awareness of future planning needs by making certain adaptations to homes in a better way. In Germany, low-interest loans are made available to people to reduce the burden on the home adaptation grant and make it more tightly focused on where it needs to be.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I am delighted with what the witnesses have said. It will make matters much easier for the constituents I meet. Regardless of where people live, they should have equal and equitable access in the context of their needs but that is not happening at present. I appreciate Mr. Scully's point about the different types of funding. If a universal principle is applied, the money will need to be invested. If, following assessment by occupational therapists, people fit the medical criteria, then that should be the end of it. Otherwise, this will not be a republic of fairness or equality of access.

Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: People are living longer. Deputy O'Dowd is lucky because Louth and Meath are on the map but Carlow is not. I am concerned about that. In my county, we have the Carlow Older Persons Forum and an older persons' council, both of which come under the age-friendly banner. The biggest issue they face is funding. The witnesses will be aware of the Leader programme and public participation networks, PPNs. There should be funding for all bodies under the age-friendly banner. It is a massive issue. From speaking with the different groups I meet regularly, I am aware that funding is the biggest issue.

It is crucial to go back to grants for elderly people, in particular because it was changed from 60 to 65 without anybody knowing. It just came into local authorities. I was a councillor for 18 years and I always dealt with housing aid for the elderly, adaptation grants and other grants. The age measure has been detrimental to elderly people. Many people with whom I deal are in their early 60s but have had a stroke or some other thing has happened. However, they are not qualifying for these grants. As such, the first thing to address going forward is the age at which grants are applicable. It is not acceptable to set the age at 66 years. However, the issue with the grants themselves relates also to timescales and waiting periods for assessments. There are massive issues even with handrails and stair lifts or seats for shower units. One goes to the local authority and back to the health board and one waits. I ask for the different groups represented here to engage in joined-up thinking through the health service, local authorities and the other groups to highlight this because it is not happening.

I acknowledge that the witnesses' bodies are trying to put a programme in place, but if one takes windows and doors, that is nearly gone. I was always told that if one applied for windows and doors under the older persons forum, which is the only way to get the grant, it had to be on health and safety grounds. If there was only a top opening, one would qualify. However, that does not even happen now. They are not passing it. The funding is not there. Do the witnesses meet with the Government on a regular basis? Much of the funding has been taken away from the health boards through the local authorities. What meetings do witnesses have with the Government and what sort of joined up thinking takes place? What is going to happen? I take the simple example of a ramp or a car parking space. I am finding that even a parking space for an elderly person outside his or her house is becoming an issue with local authorities. It is a big thing for an elderly person or a person who uses a wheelchair to have a designated parking space so that he or she can get near his or her home. These are simple things but they are massive issues.

Local authorities are also falling down in the area of building houses for elderly people. Every year, a certain number of houses should be built for elderly people, but it is not happening. We are lucky if we get a few bungalows every year which should be given to the elderly.

It is not happening because there is so much demand. People who have had cancer or who use a wheelchair must be considered, which is right. One then has older people who were waiting for a house but cannot get it. A massive survey should be carried out on elderly people who may be living a few miles from a town in a larger three or four-bedroom house. We need to look at downsizing and to establish what can be made available for people to downsize to smaller houses with access to towns, doctors, shops and libraries.

What is the remit of the witnesses' groups going forward? While it is welcome that there are different groups, what programme do they have together to work through the health service? The biggest issue I see for elderly people currently relates to hospital appointments, whether that is for a check-up or day-patient appointment. There are almost 800 people in Carlow-Kilkenny waiting to get into Kilkenny hospital for a day appointment or a small procedure. There is a huge waiting list in relation to cataract procedures. These are hugely important matters for elderly people but we are not dealing with them. Can one of the witnesses fill me in as to how Carlow has been forgotten, which is a massive issue for me as a Carlow Senator? What is proposed in relation to funding and working with different bodies? I thank the witnesses. While the points they have made are crucial, there are massive issues for the elderly which we need to address.

Ms Catherine McGuigan: Carlow County Council has one of the best age-friendly programmes. The chair of Carlow's Older Person's Council, Joe Butler, has been a wonderful ambassador and fantastic representative.

Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: I live near Joe Butler and that is how I meet him every two weeks. Funding is his biggest issue.

Ms Catherine McGuigan: The presentation referred just to the 21 local authorities which participated in the healthy and positive ageing initiative. That is not indicative of the landscape of the age friendly programme. The programme is in all 31 local authority areas. The first one to take it on was Louth County Council, shortly followed by Meath, Fingal, Cavan, Monaghan and Kilkenny. Then, gradually, every other county council came on board. Obviously, the age-friendly programme has the resources to be able to help facilitate its roll-out.

One of the core principles behind it is that, oftentimes, there are many good elements working although they are inconsistent and patchy. It might be working well in Mayo or Carlow but we need to learn from that. The age-friendly programme intended not to lobby or be combative but to ask older people to co-design solutions with us in order we could bring them to the senior stakeholders. Accordingly, an older person's council was established in every local authority area along with a strategic alliance. The strategic alliance, chaired by the chief executive of the local authority, involves a Garda chief superintendent, as well as senior personnel from the HSE, the education and training boards, NGOs, the private and public sectors and academia to collectively look at older people's priorities at local level. At a national level, we are trying to give scale to the issues older people are raising and also ensure they are representative. Older people are not a homogenous group. Not all 70 year olds are able to walk 5 km or whatever the case may be. Some have chronic conditions, dementia or suffer from rural isolation while others are active. There are affluent older people and others in poverty. We have tried to collectively get what the key issues are.

We bring together and meet the chief executive officers of the NGOs every three months to ensure we are sharing our different learnings and what we are doing. There are 12 to 14 members across this who we meet every three months. At national level, our oversight group has

four departmental assistant secretaries, chief executives, a Garda assistant commissioner, the head of Chambers Ireland and a director from the HSE. We are feeding up with the national issues. We want to ensure those issues are representative.

We did not want to create pots of funding to do age-friendly things. We wanted pots of funding to deliver services in an age-friendly way. It is more about being creative with the budgets we already have, particularly in the context of housing. For example, Carlow is one of the best counties for age-friendly parking. Carlow County Council has designed the template which we can share with other local authorities. It is like the mother and baby parking notice and is easily identifiable as a parking facility for those who may not qualify for a disability badge.

Many initiatives have been rolled out. Some we have helped deliver directly. Others we have put structure around. In all projects, we try to scale up, replicate what works, share best practice and ensure there is consistency around the country. We are also scaling up on what are the national priority issues which we are getting from the grassroots. I agree with the Senator that, in principle, we need to have more resources at local level to ensure we can continue to provide local delivery.

Mr. Seán Moynihan: We are part of an alliance which comprises Age Action, Age and Opportunity, Third Age, the Hospice Foundation and the Senior Citizens Parliament. The chief executive officers of these organisations will meet once a month. We put in common Government and pre-budget submissions. We are sending one simple message on various policies to all the different political parties. We work with the Department of Health on the national positive ageing strategy. A subset of that encompassing four or five CEOs is meeting all the designated officers in each Department, be it transport or health, in connection with older people and trying to get some traction for the implementation of the national positive ageing strategy on the basis that a whole-of-Government approach is difficult to operate from one Department but, as NGOs, we can go between the different Departments because we do not have those statutory boundaries. As an organisation, we have long realised that no one NGO can meet the needs of all populations. While we have scaled, and plan to scale further on what we do, we also have a coalition of approximately 54 smaller community groups up and down the country where we provide technology, resources and training to other agencies. Since the Senator is being local about it, that includes Kilkenny and Carlow Contact. Ultimately, Kilkenny and Carlow Contact falls within our remit. This promotes common practice and quality standards. Ten organisations are on the one management information system we provide so the work done in Carlow will be the same as that done in Kilkenny, Donegal, Louth and Dublin and when people go into an acute hospital or look for services, we have information on what we are doing.

There is much to be done and much that we are trying to do to bring our sector together to demonstrate our responsibilities to work collectively in arenas such as this. The challenge for us is always that there are so many of us in terms of what we are all doing. There is a very significant amount of partnership and we are moving beyond partnership to how we align and coalesce strategically. There is enough work for everybody but we also need to work with the political system to bring about the changes in the type of grants schemes and the types of housing we build so that these coalitions and this co-operation actually come to fruition.

Chairman: Does Mr. Bond wish to make any comments?

Mr. Rodd Bond: We are trying to look at collaboration in a range of different layers and levels and perhaps our challenge is capacity and mismatch. As Ms McGuigan mentioned, the age-friendly alliances bring senior stakeholders at local level together and get the agencies to

start to break down the silos and work together. That is a critical piece.

At the other end, a role we introduced in County Louth called Cúltaca involves working with older people to help them support themselves and produce their own plans. This is growing across the country with the service co-ordination model. It works in helping older people to see and plan early - it is a case of “a stitch in time, save nine” - so we can be more preventative rather than reactive in some of the situations. The capacity building we really need to work on is in middle management between the HSE and the local authority in terms of it becoming their job to work together and to be more integrated. That is something that is new.

The big challenge with regard to resources is whether we are introducing new money or if it is a case of pooling existing resources and trying to be more effective in sharing the budgets that are available and spreading them around. That is a challenge. We do not have a very good culture and history of pooling resources and perhaps we need to look at this aspect. It is a resource-constrained world so the key energies come back to empowering people to be able to do more for themselves and to be able to build on the huge resource value that is there in volunteering that comes in to help support that kind of work. It is cross-sectoral. We are on the journey but there is a lot of capacity building to do to be able to engage in that collaboration at a level that really does make a difference.

Dr. Lucia Carragher: I reinforce what Mr. Bond has said. The research centre is an applied research centre. That gives us a unique opportunity in the sense that we work in academia but we also work in the community so we are working directly with older people. We would have conversations with older people and would be in positions with older people that other organisations would not be in so readily. We would be right in the homes. We would be in the homes of older people who would not perhaps be in age-friendly structures, which would be wonderful but, as Ms McGuigan stated, one does not get everybody there. We would be in the position where we would see the issues and talk to the people who are not in those structures for all sorts of reasons. In County Louth and through the Age Friendly Ireland structure, we have got good at supporting and identifying what is wrong in the system and supporting it more effectively but we are not radically changing things in any way; it is more a case of making things that are in place work more efficiently rather than providing new models.

Through research and collaboration with partners at international conferences, we hear the conversations of colleagues. At the gerontological society conference last year in San Francisco, it was agreed at one of our meetings on some of the presentations from a number of different countries that in 20 to 30 years time we will probably look back and say, for example, in relation to nursing homes: “Did we actually tolerate that for so long?” There is this whole drive towards being more creative and having new models. Sharing resources is needed but so too, as Mr. Bond states, is introducing and testing new models and moving on because that is where all countries will go, only at different paces.

Ms Corona Joyce: We welcome Senator Murnane O'Connor's point in support of looking again at age eligibility. Looking at the figures, it is interesting to note the impact it had in 2015 when the number of payments fell by almost half year on year. That is something on which further analysis would be beneficial as well.

The Senator mentioned hospital appointments. There were 142,400 patients on delayed discharges from public hospitals in quarter 3 of 2017. Obviously, not all of them were related to adaptation and having suitable homes to go home to but it is probably easy to speculate that a significant proportion of them were related to that.

A related issue which is coming through strongly on our phones and our helpline is that of persons not being able to make hospital appointments and related transport issues. There is a large increase in the volume of those physically not being able to get there and leave their homes. That is something that would merit further examination too.

Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: I thank the witnesses for responding with those points. I stated there are more than 700 persons in Carlow-Kilkenny waiting for hospital appointments. I do not know how many of them are elderly but maybe the elderly could be made a high priority, particularly if they are in pain. Everybody is a priority but one hates to think of the elderly maybe not getting a lift or whatever.

It is appropriate that we say “well done” to the older persons’ forum, particularly Mr. Joe Butler and those in Carlow who I would meet as often as I can. On-street parking is important but my issue would be more within a housing estate where a person is elderly and cannot get his or her messages in.

I have highlighted that people, as they are getting older, are coming in looking for stoves and I am sure the witnesses are aware of this. There is no Government scheme to provide grants for stoves. If one is in a local authority house, one can avail of what is called the “self-help” scheme which qualifies one for half of it but then the person must come up with other half if he or she wants a stove. If one is a homeowner, it is difficult to get stoves. I am wondering whether the witnesses have found this but in the past few months, particularly with the winters having got so cold, many people have been coming to me on this matter. I will put it on my priority list with the Minister but I wonder if the witnesses would also make that a priority.

There is something else I will ask them before I finish. The grant scheme normally operates twice a year. One gets the grant scheme in January for local authorities but then it finishes. Normally, one receives a letter stating there is no funding at present and must reapply in September. I have issues with this. Could all the different groups ask the Government to sort out the funding and not send out letters stating that its funding is used, it is not in a position to respond and it might have more funding at the end of the year? Normally it does come twice a year, I am not saying that it does not.

Deputy Pat Casey: Not everywhere.

Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: Not everywhere, but we are lucky in Carlow that we have been getting it. It would be useful if the witnesses could also look at that as a priority. As they have said it is the small things and having to wait that make a difference. People wonder if they will get the grant. Recently, I have written to people with whom I am working to say that it will come back in September. Is there a scheme that the witnesses could also work on along with the Government and local authorities? I will push it from this end. I thank the witnesses. They have made great points on areas that need to be worked on.

Chairman: Deputy Ó Broin is next. The witnesses might cover some of the same things in their answers to Deputy Ó Broin and Senator Murnane O'Connor so I will return to them after.

Deputy Eoin Ó Broin: I thank the witnesses for their presentations. It would be worth taking a step back and reminding people why we are here today. The Chair’s proposal to have these sessions and for the committee to produce a report is very important, so it is not merely a case of the witnesses coming here and telling the committee what they think and us responding; the purpose of these hearings is for the Chair to author, and then the committee members

to agree, a report with very specific recommendations on the policy or funding changes we want the Government to make. My question relates to that part of our work, however I wish to respond to a couple of the debates and raise two of the biggest challenges which the witnesses have put to us which I hope will form a big part of our discussion on the other side of the hearings.

It is timely that we are having this meeting in the same week as Focus Ireland launches its campaign on older people and homelessness. It is only one part of the picture but the fact that we have seen a 40% increase in the number of older people in emergency accommodation is shocking. We are in a cycle where we think we cannot be shocked anymore by the numbers of homeless children or families. It might sound like a small number, but the idea that there are 119 people in emergency accommodation is shocking. The most shocking thing is how easy it would be to get those people out of emergency accommodation. It is not as though we do not have 119 appropriate units somewhere in the country for those people. I wanted to start by highlighting that campaign and urging people to support it.

In my constituency, I have found an increasing number of older people, people in their late 50s or early 60s, in mortgage difficulty or being forced into emergency accommodation often after a relationship breakdown. That is an issue before we discuss the older people who have to move back in with their adult sons and daughters because of their own housing crises. I suspect some of the figures that are disturbing us will get worse. It is important for us to be mindful of that.

On the adaptation grants, it is important to remember the €60 million is not only for older people's adaptation grants but also for disability grants, which are a smaller portion of the figure. In next year's budget the Government will have an extra €3 billion of fiscal space and we could, for example, simply double the budget if the Government was of a mind to do so. We all need to ask for more from the Government on the budget, particularly when it is such a small sum of money and those adaptations have a transformational impact on people's lives. These are things such as getting a stair lift which allows someone to access half of their home, which they may not have been able to access for several years, or getting a downstairs shower or wet room. I would like to see this committee recommend that in addition to reversing some of the negative changes to the grant, a significant increase be made in that grant to local authorities. I would like to get some sense of where the witnesses would like to see us pitching this. In my local authority area, one can wait three years for a grant. That is not only for minor mobility aids, but also for serious adaptation work. I am sure it is the same in other local authority areas, but I have constituents, whether local authority tenants or private home owners, who go through the very complicated process, are deemed eligible but then are put in a queue in which they can remain for three years. These are people who have already had the crisis and are already waiting for the funds and suffer an additional wait. The length of time people who have been approved for the grant have to wait is something that we need to highlight.

I am also concerned that local authorities and elected representatives on local authorities - and I include myself in this when I was a councillor - do not have a good record on ensuring that when Part 8 social housing stock is being planned, there is both adequate provision for a sufficient supply of units to meet the needs of older people and to facilitate downsizing as a genuine choice rather than as something that is forced. I would be interested in the witnesses' thoughts on this. I have never been part of a conversation about age-friendly design in a local authority context. Whatever about the private sector, to which I will return in a moment, we should look for local authority new builds - of which there will be 40,000 in the next couple of

years - to have age-friendly design built into them at a minimum.

The committee report should deal with that significant matter.

One of the biggest issues the witnesses have raised relates to age-friendly design. The committee needs to look at the cost implications and the best mechanism particularly in light of a new round of county development plans being proposed post the local elections next year. Do we need to start insisting that these need not just to become options for social and-or private development, but need to become standards? What would that cost? What would those standards be? We would need a lot of information on that. If the witnesses have information today or if they can recommend experts who can provide that to us in oral or written sessions in the future, that would be really interesting. The most compelling argument the witnesses make is that if this committee is to make a contribution to tackling the problem, age-friendly design is the priority. We can talk about adaptation grants and other stuff but that is the number one issue.

The second issue is a problem not just for older people. We need to see housing, particularly public or social housing, as more than bricks and mortar. Local authority officials here will know that the community element of the housing department is always the poor relation and is always the smaller bit of the picture. In other jurisdictions where they do public housing on a much bigger scale, the community element is an integral part of housing in terms of where people live and communities.

I would also be interested in any specific recommendations the witnesses believe we should consider beyond a more general recommendation that we need the HSE and local authorities to work together more. How do we put that into policy? What type of recommendations can we make? The witnesses talked about a paradigm shift, but in our world we need specific ideas and propositions to advise Government as to what needs to happen in terms of policy delivery.

What further information can the witnesses give us on the cost of implementing regulations for age-friendly design? What are the models of best practice? What countries do it better? What housing associations in Ireland are doing it well?

The witnesses were very generous in their comments on the two meagre references to older people in Rebuilding Ireland. I ask for more information on what is happening with those recommendations. My concern is that the scope of those recommendations is very limited. If the committee were to make additional policy recommendations to Rebuilding Ireland, what should they be?

I have a question for the NGOs. It is not about beating up on local government or central government. I ask them to give us their sense of how poorly local and central government are placing the needs of older people in the overall hierarchy of needs in our housing crisis. I am not trying to give people a hard time, but we have a crisis and given the things local authorities and central government have to respond to, it means other things get pushed down the line. What would the witnesses like us to argue to be pushed back up the line of priorities?

We can publish a report with 100 recommendations, which is great. However, 100 recommendations are much more difficult for us to push on Government. Therefore, let us have 50 or 100 recommendations if they are required, but what are the witnesses' top five? What would they like the committee to focus on not just what goes into a report, but what we can continually raise with Government in oral questions and committee meetings? We need to have those highlighted as much as possible. I believe the report of the Committee on Housing and Home-

lessness made 180 recommendations, but we chose 25 priority ones. It would be useful to try to do something similar with this report.

Ms Corona Joyce: I thank the Deputy for raising many of the issues which are coming up, particularly in terms of our client work, on the phone and from meeting our members. One thing that came to mind when listening to the Deputy is that there is a lot of fear and anticipation from people who are nowhere close to needing any of these resources. They are mindful and are raising this as a priority issue well in advance of their need for it. That cannot be overstated enough in terms of saying that because there is not clarity there. Given that there is not uniform application of the various grants and because the homes that are being built are not age-friendly, this is a real and present issue for people who are ten or 20 years off.

We will come back to the Deputy with our top five recommendations. We will certainly recommend that all new builds should have age-friendly design. Perhaps my colleague would like to take the question on whether local authorities are prioritising older people in terms of their vulnerability, particularly as we are hearing the other side of that as an issue.

Mr. Gerard Scully: To respond to Deputy Ó Broin in the context of increasing local authority funding and the point that people have to reapply, I suspect there are also people falling off waiting lists. If people apply but do not get funding and do not reapply, they are left in the homes and they are actually falling off the lists because nobody contacts them. That is a real problem.

Senator Murnane O'Connor referred to funding running out. There has to be guaranteed funding for the year. If there is not and if money runs out, people are then in a race. When people contact Age Action, we tell them to get in as early in the new year as possible and even to wait until the new year to apply because they are then coming into the stream of funding. If they apply in the second half of the year, they are competing from a waiting list. The funding needs to be guaranteed for the year and that is a major priority.

We also need to remember that the disability grants cover different age cohorts and are not just for older people. There are other grant schemes, such as the home improvement scheme for older people, and most of the calls we receive are actually about home improvements rather than home adaptations. That may be because the level of grants is higher under the home improvement scheme rather than the home adaptation scheme. The work that needs to be done often comes under the former rather than the latter. There is also the mobility age grant, which people do not know about and do not apply for. That lack of information and knowledge among older people is an issue.

Ms Catherine McGuigan: I am delighted with the standard of the questions from Deputy Ó Broin. I really like what he said about the five big-ticket items because that is what we are looking at. He mentioned the housing adaptation scheme, a decent review of the scheme and a projection of the population growth in the existing housing stock, both in the private and social sector, in order to determine what we are going to require, so it is not reactive and a case of putting resources in whenever the critical incident happens. To take up what Senator Murnane O'Connor said on having it open all year round, a person can have a bad fall in the month of June; it does not have to happen in the winter months. There are definitely measures whereby such issues could be reviewed. I agree that the purpose of this group is not to review the housing adaptation grant, HAG, the mobility aids grant, MAG, and housing aid for older people, HOP, because that is not what housing for older people is going to look like in the future.

Deputy Ó Broin asked a number of questions. Copies of the SLIOTAR housing research have been circulated to the Clerk. We have all our publications online but I am happy to provide copies. That particular research was a review of the Great Northern Haven, in which Mr. Bond was involved, and it looked at some of the models, such as support co-ordination in London and Germany. Basically, 11 recommendations were made across the four considerations, such as the physical considerations of bricks and mortar, as well all the things Deputy Ó Broin talked about. The fluffy side is so much more important now. I refer, for example, to all of the community supports and activities that enable people to have transportation and social participation, which are so critical to housing, as well as the technology supports.

Deputy Ó Broin referred to the draft policy and the two actions in Rebuilding Ireland. If one looks across multiple strategies and policies, in the rural development plan, for example, they look at brownfield sites over shops. We have one project in Meath at the minute. Mr. Lynch has a site right in the centre of town, within 300 m of the acute hospital and the pharmacy; it is a derelict site and there are four one-person dwellings going on it. We have built in universal design, very simple things like a door entry system, Cat 5 cable to enable technology to go in, age-friendly parking right beside it for the rural transport company to take them to acute appointments. That is a very small site, but a very replicable example.

When considering models, the housing agency and ourselves are looking at different models around the country so that we can put a proposal together, which includes mixed tenure and different allocations, not just social housing being built by local authorities. There are ones being spearheaded, as Mr. Moynihan mentioned earlier, by local ambassadors, approved housing bodies, developers or whatever the case may be. They are also included in that draft policy that the Department is going to produce. We can certainly link that.

In terms of crunching down even further and looking at the universal design, a full suite of universal design, obviously, by virtue of what is there, is more costly. What is mandated currently is part N on age-friendly design which would be extracting what we would feel is critical. In that housing and public realm training that we spoke about earlier, we have been delivering that across all the local authority areas. That is how we are getting in and saying this is what we need to be thinking about, this is what one needs to be cognisant of. Even in Meath our whole county development plan is stitching in that age-friendly ethos. We would like the next tranche of these plans to be taking the same approach.

Dr. Gerald Craddock, from the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design has helped to co-design our housing and public realm training. He is also doing a piece of work with Clúid Housing at the minute on a cost-benefit analysis. This will enable us to look at how much more is it per square metre to build in an age-friendly way, to build universal design. What is really important when you have the metrics and the figures, is to be able to say, if one does it this way this is what one saves down the line. That needs to be made attractive to developers or whoever is going to be doing the building work.

I will certainly be happy after this meeting to provide the Deputy with all of the publications, all of that research, because that particular SLIOTAR housing research is what we recommended the Department to put into their draft framework.

I think I have covered everything there. I want to reiterate that the HAGs, MAGs and HOPs are very important and maybe Mr. Lynch may want to add to this. We can increase the budget and keep it open but I do not believe it is going to be the big ticket item, in those top five.

Mr. Barry Lynch: I might just clarify the funding situation on the grants themselves. Earlier in the year we usually get a letter from the Department saying that we can spend a percentage of last year's allocation, so we do not necessarily know what our allocation is until the middle of the year. Later in the year we may get a top-up, depending if we are showing the ability to get through the grants and spend them.

The point I would make is that everyone would like to see more funding coming in but to return to Deputy Ó Broin's point about the waiting list, this is also a labour-intensive operation. As a housing director, I know the people trying to deliver housing programmes are the same people having to send out to have the grants done. Any budget should take account of the fact or should build in a percentage for staff resources to actually do these tasks and this would help speed up the programme.

Obviously it is important to deal with these emergency situations but the future is about universal design, as Ms. Mc Guigan has said, and we are certainly trying to build that into our planning process.

We could make a recommendation that for any housing schemes they should be *pro rata* to population percentages. If we have 10% elderly in the population, 10% should be dedicated to this group. Certainly in our own Part 8 will be focusing on disabilities, particularly, but we will certainly cater for the same group, the elderly, as well. It is all down to resources funding, capital funding and we need to recommend, as part of the overall Rebuilding Ireland targets, that we set a benchmark for the elderly, in terms of the projects that we bring forward. That would certainly help the situation.

I take the point that has been made about community. It is not always the poor relation and I know several housing authorities that have put housing and community together, including our own, but there is a good synergy. It needs to be done between the two. The activities of the age-friendly alliance, housing and community, the public participation network are all brought under the one department. That is very important and it is the way to go in terms of how local authorities would be structured.

Deputy Eoin Ó Broin: Can I ask just one supplementary question relevant to that? The Minister has made a big play about his new central Government standards for apartments, which obviously will have an impact in terms of the county development plans. Is there not an argument for something similar to be done in terms of design for housing for older people that we could get into the 30 or 40 county development plan processes? I ask because as a local authority manager, Mr. Lynch is obviously keen for the local authority to have its role in the development process, which I support. Does he think there would be a need for a central government set of regulations alongside that to inform it?

Mr. Barry Lynch: These certainly should be set down as best practice. It would be the case that we would be designing for the future. To go back to the presentation's closing statement, if one designs for the old, one caters for everyone. I believe this should be built into it.

Mr. Seán Moynihan: I am trying to cover all the bases in this reply. In respect of homelessness, the Deputy is correct in that the seeds for the next homeless crisis among older people are there on the basis of the rental issue. There is no long-term security for anybody in rental. We are heading to a position in urban centres where up to 50% of people may rent in the future and the number of people who are over 65 and are renting has gone up 28% since 2011. As the age group below that has gone up by higher percentages, we will have an awful lot of people in

this old age category. One of the aforementioned five big-ticket items may relate to long-term leases. In long-term leases, one always has the right to sell the property and so on. As noted earlier, we have been inviting in institutional investors - professional landlords- to meet the need and there seems to be no reason such people operating at that scale cannot give long-term leases to give people the security that is available in other countries. Otherwise, one will have an awful lot of older people looking for homes.

At present, 90% of all the older people in our housing are coming from homeless services, which traditionally was not the situation. There are approximately 35 older people for each house and 35 people over 70 years all trying to get into one house is not a good queue to be facing. When they try to obtain private rented accommodation in their 70s, they turn up, usually on their own and perhaps try to pay the rent with housing assistance payment, HAP. They are just not attractive to the private sector.

Ultimately, the only people who can ramp up to this scale are probably the local authorities. They are the only people who can build at the scale that this requires. We are an approved housing body, AHB, and have plans to deliver another 500 units in the next five years. That is only the tip of the iceberg and it is for all of the AHBs. The councils, therefore, need to do this.

In respect of the age-friendly design, my understanding is that one is looking at an additional cost of approximately 3%. Because the structures are well built, my understanding is that over the lifetime of the building, which is around 40 years, one recoups that money on the basis that adaptations or changes do not have to be made during the person's lifetime. As Mr. Bond said earlier, one then is building for everybody because getting older is the best outcome and hopefully is a journey we are all on.

It is cheaper in the long run. Consequently, the second item I would choose is that universal or age-friendly design. In that regard, we always are worried when we hear about lowering standards to invite other people in. There are high returns on rent and on property circulation but we are lowering the standards now. We are currently working on one development where we are taking an old unit built 30 years ago and are refurbishing it by turning it into one of these two-into-one dwellings. I refer to people living in an area of 280 sq. ft. We look at such developments built 25 years ago and we probably ask what people were thinking. As we lower the standards, I would be concerned that perhaps in ten or 15 years' time people will look at us and ask what we were thinking. It is a short-term thing as the lifespan is 40 years. On what we can do, I offer the commitment that when we are talking to the other non-governmental organisations in putting our pre-budget submission together, we will all put in the same proposal for alterations to the grant scheme and give a consistent and clear message of our different experiences. If we agree on five things, we should submit five things. If there are three things we do not agree on, we should leave them out. That is the type of thing we have to try to do. An inch is better than a mile if it is in the right direction.

Regarding Rebuilding Ireland, there are two major concerns for older people of which downsizing is one. Only 13% of older people live in housing with more than seven rooms. That includes kitchens, living rooms and sitting rooms. I am slightly concerned that this is like the issue of vacant housing. We could send downsizing officers all over the country, taking resources away from public officials while looking for things that may not exist. Individuals who downsize at the moment are generally couples in good health with a very substantial asset. In most cases, they will probably manage it themselves. We want downsizing to be a choice, but the choices will probably have to be built first. It is the other way around.

Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: It has to be a choice.

Mr. Seán Moynihan: The Economic and Social Research Institute, ESRI, produced a report on downsizing a couple of years ago that probably claimed the narrative in this area. However, the report was commissioned by Bank of Ireland and the National Asset Management Agency, NAMA. I will leave it there.

That is where we come to Rebuilding Ireland. We need to age-proof it. We want all families and children to have housing and homes. Single people and couples are behind them on the list however, and that is the majority of people coming through. That is the long-term view. As the legislators, the committee members are the ones who must look five, ten or 15 years ahead. In fairness to the public officials, when visiting the Department one finds they are overwhelmed with the responsibilities they already have. When we mention older people's housing, it seems that they are up to here and they cannot take any more.

Ultimately, what we are trying to do is to work out the demand for these measures. The committee should take notice of our responsibility and accountability. We have a situation where there is a lot of capacity-building. There is a lot of discussion, and there is much commonality in the views of different people. The messages are consistent from politicians, NGOs and councils. We need to turn that into a bias towards action on the ground. That means looking at things like demand and where it arises. We need to ask who, what, when, where and how. That will produce figures for varieties of housing that are quite uncomfortable and difficult to deal with but at least by having those numbers we will understand the challenge that we can collectively work on.

If we provide housing for older people, we are in the support business. That is the way I put it. In a large cohort of older people, a percentage will be very active and independent at any one time, and a percentage will need support. It is critical to bring those supports to bear through the housing. There needs to be a national framework. As Mr. Bond kindly mentioned, we are trying to roll out navigators, people who can help older individuals navigate multiple complex systems so that they can age at home. That might include transport, housing, health or anything else. It is important to help them age at home and build the supports around them.

From Mr. Bond's pioneering work, we have taken on some of the proactive technology that Netwell has developed. Again, assistance technology is something that everybody agrees on and we are currently rolling it out. We are trying to bring these approaches to scale, but there must be funding streams and support for them. The point of an NGO is that we help define the problems and then we help demonstrate the solutions. We need the support to bring them to scale and in many cases that is what we are missing. I note that there is so much we can agree on and I ask the committee members to create a bias towards action in their report.

Mr. Rodd Bond: I thank the committee for the insightful questions. Innovation is happening, but our challenge is that is very piecemeal. It is happening in different places at different speeds. This morning, I heard that a new housing programme in Louth will request developers to respond with universal design standards, so things are starting to happen in that area. We need to programme it and to put a wider frame across such innovations, to encourage sharing and to have closer and more in-depth collaborations.

On the question of the situating of age-friendly housing, I think of our key policy of a few years ago which was to build sustainable neighbourhoods. I do not know if we have had a chance to see if, ten or 15 years later, they have cohesion and are holding together with all the

mobility and labour market pulls and pushes. Are sustainable communities sustaining themselves?

It is important to embed age-friendly practices but this is a challenge across Europe. The core components will look different from traditional housing standards, which were around ergonomics and the size of flats, etc. They will include location, neighbourhoods and access to services such as transport. The guidelines need to be contextual and we will need to look at community connectivity, etc.

We need to put a lot of work into the digital dimension and the extent to which technology is embedded. There are core challenges around broadband infrastructure to support services but technology is changing so fast that there will be issues around procurement and supply. Our homes will move from being bricks and mortar to being something more connected to organic systems.

Senator Murnane O'Connor asked about stoves, and this highlights some of the interconnectivity and collaboration to which I referred. In County Louth, this is addressed by sustainable energy communities, working in conjunction with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. The stove addresses the need for heat but the home needs insulation and other things for which there may be programmes we need to connect to.

Deputy Eoin Ó Broin: My suggestion around central government standards was not to replicate the reduction of standards in apartments. It was a recommendation for a central guideline for local authorities.

Chairman: I will join Deputy Casey in the last round.

Deputy Pat Casey: I fully agree with Deputy Ó Broin that standards in respect of universal living and designing for older people should come from central government. If we leave them to 31 or 32 local authorities, there will be differences across the country. I agree that it is much easier to design these things at the beginning rather than retrofit them. As Mr. Moynihan said, a 3% cost over the lifetime of a building is nothing and it is much more costly to retrofit after 30 years. Much of the stuff we did is working today. Doors are wider and access is much easier. A walk-in shower is now in fashion, whereas years ago we favoured a cubicle. Nowadays everyone wants a wet room and this is integrated seamlessly into designs.

Everyone has mentioned the housing adaptation grant and there are, indeed, huge inconsistencies across local authorities. Even within local authorities, people do not fully understand how a decision was made as to why some person got it while some other person did not. However, I am more concerned about the people who are not aware that these grants are available to them. We have all encountered such people. We have knocked on doors and met elderly people who are not aware that there is funding available to assist them. That is something we must address. I met a couple in their 80s in my constituency office who were trying to get exterior insulation for their house, but it is a terraced house and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, SEAI, will not grant it. No matter what they put into their house, they are wasting their time. It is a solid block wall and they cannot insulate it. Sometimes we have to be able to bend the grants to suit genuine applicants such as that couple. I have looked everywhere for them but I cannot get anything for them. They cannot heat their house and because it is a terraced house and the other neighbours will not do the wraparound insulation, they do not qualify for it.

When I look back on the facilities that were available in my county about 40 years ago, I

sometimes think that people were more aware then of the housing needs of elderly people. In my community, the town council in Wicklow built Crinion Park, a scheme of 40 or 50 houses beside the old health board. People wanted to move there. I am not sure which witness mentioned it but if we build these facilities, people will want to move into them. Sadly, the health board has gone so Crinion Park is sitting there and is not being utilised to its full extent. The other example was in the small rural town of Carnew. Carnew Community Care, again built by champions of the community, now has 28 supported living houses. That was built in the 1980s. There is a supportive day care centre and people want to move into them.

I believe that we should get the standards right from the first day, rather than retrofit them. If we can build the homes that people want to move into, rather than forcing them to move into them, we will begin to tackle the grant. However, we are a long way from doing away with the housing adaptation grant. If we had a hundred times the amount of funding, we still would not have enough. It will be there for a long time.

Chairman: I will not go near the housing adaptation grants. However, I have focused on this issue for many years and since I was elected to the Dáil I have been doing a fair amount of work and research on the area. When one considers the statistics for the next 20 years or so, which show that we will have 1.4 million people over 65 years of age, we have a prime opportunity here to make a difference in the next number of years, whether that is through purpose built units, addressing the issue with the current stock or giving people other options. I recognise that people might not want to downsize but I believe that is because there are no options available to them to do so. There are models across Europe and the US. I visited a couple of them in the US, probably 14 years ago, and some in Europe to get a sense of what we can deliver here. With regard to Great Northern Haven, how long did it take to deliver that from conception to turning the key?

My local authority in Dún Laoghaire has some fantastic models of purpose built units, such as in Rochestown House, where people could downsize. However, it was not so much that they want to downsize as it is to help with the financial burden and financial security. Most members of the committee canvas regularly and, particularly in winter, we see the number of single occupant houses, be they private or social houses, where people are living in one or two rooms in the house. That is because of the cost of maintaining the property. It is general knowledge that if there are options available, people generally do not wish to move more than a kilometre away from where they currently live because that is their community. They want to stay there because that is where they feel they have security, friendships and consistency. It is about quality of life for people.

I wish to focus on what purpose built options we can deliver, whether on State-owned land or by encouraging private developers to come forward with schemes. I am aware that some are already doing that. To be parochial again, although I doubt that I will mention Dún Laoghaire as many times as Carlow has been mentioned, there is a mixed tenure scheme in Shankhill for 540 units. Deputy Ó Broin is familiar with it. As part of that, we want to provide step-down units, both public and private, on that site.

Regardless of size, all houses on private developments - whether they have one, two, three or four bedrooms - must be age friendly. This will allow people living in three or four bedroom starter homes to downsize in the same development when their children leave home. The Re-building Ireland programme aims to achieve this objective through mixed tenure developments. I accept, however, that this is taking a long time to realise.

Last year, the Minister of State, Deputy Damien English, held a competition on homes for smart ageing. Even simple measures in the areas of design and construction can help. For example, few people think of installing saddle boards and hand rails. Moreover, when a house is being built the installation of an additional rolled steel joist, RSJ, will facilitate an extension to the side or back of the property 20 or 30 years later at substantially lower costs than would otherwise be the case. Additional structures could be provided to develop the property for split living or another purpose. The point is that properties can be adapted to meet the householder's needs at different times in his or her life.

I presume Mr. Lynch is familiar with many of the build to lease initiatives. Many build to rent properties are also coming on stream and we need to tap into this approach to a greater extent. If the proposed development in Cherrywood secures planning permission, the first phase will include build to rent properties.

While increasing construction costs by 3% may not seem significant to us, we must be careful as we have a housing crisis and we are trying to get banks to fund developers. Profit may be a bad word to some but developers need to make money from developing sites and offering houses at an affordable price point. An additional 3% in the cost on construction could be a barrier to development. We need to find imaginative ways to reduce this figure. I do not have all the answers but if we decide to require developers to build to age-friendly standards at an additional cost of 3%, we will have to sell that requirement in a way that does not place a further burden on the construction industry. I am being pragmatic and realistic in that regard.

We also need to tackle rural and suburban isolation. The organisations represented today are doing considerable work in this area. State-owned land will play a vital role if we are to develop housing for this purpose. I have been pushing hard to have State-owned land used to build housing for older people. A fantastic scheme under way in Ballinteer will provide older people with an option, although we are not trying to get people to move out of their homes if they do not want to do so. We are simply seeking to give them further options in terms of quality of life and help with financial security. We have a long way to go in this area but all sides have shown a willingness to deliver. A tremendous amount of work is being done locally, not only by local authorities but also by the various organisations involved in this area. The older people network in Dún Laoghaire is a superb organisation. I have ongoing engagement with a number of organisations on the policy initiatives I wish to advance.

A number of other issues were raised, including by Deputy Ó Broin. We want to give people security and choice. The issue is one of providing options. Whether this is done by the private or public sector makes no odds to me. This is about providing homes for people who are flexible throughout their lives. None of us knows what we will face tomorrow or the next day. I fully agree with the point made regarding the adaptation grants. None of us knows whether we will fall tomorrow or in six months. If a house, home or unit is built in a way that recognises that these things can happen, it eases the burden on the health care and home help systems.

We hope to have representatives of Home Instead and the Royal Institute of Architects before the joint committee in the weeks ahead. We have also written to Clúid and a number of other organisations seeking submissions. I have read the majority of the submissions the committee has received thus far. The issue now is one of formulating action. I am biased towards action because all the research has been done and it is now time to formulate ways of delivering. It would probably be easier to have five points at the beginning, especially if we are trying to filter down into local authorities, which have a significant role to play in this regard. The local authorities do not need a mandate from the Department to do this. I believe there is a willing-

ness there already to do this. We need our local elected representatives to come on board and, where Part 8s come forward, to agree to those breakdowns between social and private units and what is accessible.

I want to thank you all for coming here this morning and for the information that has been shared by the witnesses with the committee and the ongoing engagement that we have with many of those in attendance.

I really want to know what are the options that we can build now. Are they assisted living where we give over the first two or three floors in an apartment block to those supports and communal services where people live in self-contained apartments? Or is it stand-alone homes for people that will adapt throughout the next 20 or 30 years of their lives. I think we will be able to manage the mixed-tenure option and ensure that any developments coming forward will be age-friendly.

We should not even have to think of Part N. It should be a given that every unit is adaptable and flexible.

Ms Catherine McGuigan: Thank you Chairman and members. A lot of ground has been covered in those comments. The first thing I wish to reply on is the different models. I have mentioned the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design and if the committee is going to invite other organisations to attend that would be a critical question. In respect of the 3% additional cost, in particular, that can be explained because with the additional dividends that arise, one will quickly see that percentage addressed when one is located beside a primary care location. The overall fund decreases because one is cutting costs where there is proximity to services. There is a reduction of the burdens, a decrease in missed hospital appointments and all of those kinds of issues. Dr. Craddock would be able to encapsulate these issues and show the key things that need to be included. Making this part of planning requirements at local level rather than by way of a mandate encourages competitiveness.

One of the local authorities we work with has written age-friendly or accessibility provisions into its procurement guidelines so that anything that arises, be it a housing development or buying a photocopier, is included at local level. The SLIOTAR report that I sent to the committee, demonstrates that one can be flexible at local level to encourage this approach and to encourage a level of competitiveness.

Deputy Casey talked about standards. The housing and public realm training that we have delivered to all of the local authorities was also recently delivered to 21 officials within the Department. The Assistant Secretary, who is on our oversight group, said it is really important that we understand what is coming down the line, and where we can be creative and work better with local government, particularly in terms of planning.

One of the issues referred to was standardised design, some of which has already been captured. There are many examples of this. One of these is where the housing supports have been developed by Dublin City Council with a number of different agencies. This is going to be launched as an example of the methodology and how they came up with it.

We need to be aware as well of where there is a density problem and of the differences between urban and rural. If one wants to build an older person's suite of housing and give choice in a small rural town, that is quite different from Dublin city centre. We really need to be cognisant of sprawling populations too. Older people will say choice needs to be made available.

People cannot have the grandchildren to stay over in a one bedroom apartment; that is not going to be sustainable. We need to proceed *pro rata* on the basis of where the density is but it needs to be realistic. We must provide proper choice and ensure people have access to services but that they still have space if they want to have family coming and going.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council was one of the examples I quoted in the presentation. I know I went through it fairly rapidly but it actually does have a questions and answers facility. If one is interested in downsizing, one can ring the local authority and talk to them about the various options. That is something that could be replicated and is available in some local authorities already where people can ask what their options are. It is the same if people want to know what supports are in place for their ageing parents who may not be able to manage. People want answers to the following: What is a home-care package? What is the rural transport programme? What events are on? Mr. Bond talked earlier in his submission about support co-ordination, the Cúltaca role, being able to provide that information at local level and this is what Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown is doing. If we look at the projections and choices that need to be made available and then respond to that, it speaks to the issue referred to by the Deputy of lifetime communities and mixed tenure, with three bedroom and four bedroom houses and two bedroom apartments, with a warden on site and with good access. People can live in those communities for years on end.

I really want to press home that piece around universal design because it is more cost-effective in the long run. The competition that was run last year was won by Abhaile. It is a lovely option and that would have been replicated in the Georgian quarter in Limerick, where older people might have three or four storey houses, parts of which can be converted so they can continue to live there. Much information has been garnered through those competitions and the case studies that have been worked through by the Department which we can share to see how this can be replicated across the board.

Mr. Barry Lynch: I would like to make a point on State-owned land, which affects the housing programme. At present, if one wants to transfer land from one State body to another, the Valuation Office has to value the land and money has to change hands, which in the case of a local authority probably means borrowing money and going through the elected members. It would be preferable if transfers could be facilitated without having to go through that process. In fairness, the Valuation Office has to revalue the entire country and it will have a difficulty in getting around to individual land transactions. It struck me that there might be a case to be made to reduce the VAT rate on construction for age-friendly-type developments from 13.5% to, say, 10%, which might allow that cost to be absorbed without increasing the price to the retail purchaser at the end. Perhaps something could be done within tax policy to achieve that.

Mr. Rodd Bond: To pick up on Deputy Casey's comment, bending and tolerance are issues we have to be conscious of. Sometimes our rules and regulations become so tight that they do not allow flexibility. One of the real shames is that, in many instances, home adaptation does not add value to the house and when the house goes back on the market, the first thing that happens is that all the stuff is brought back out of it again. That is a measure of failure in regard to our design, so we need some tolerance around what is appropriate in the context of building.

There was a question around bringing the Great Northern Haven into being. While I am not sure it is appropriate, I would like to extend an invitation to the committee to come to Dundalk, if it makes sense at any point. In terms of timing, the building went to tender at the very peak of the construction period in 2007, construction started in 2008 and people moved in at the beginning of 2010. We have to recognise that was a different time as it was just pre-boom and bust,

and we also have to recognise the contribution of Atlantic Philanthropies, which helped to address some of the incremental costs that might have delayed decision making around the kind of project we did if that additional resource was not there. That type of funding is not in play now.

One of the things that was central was local leadership in regard to driving it through. We have talked before about characteristics such as location and brownfield sites. For us, this was very important as they are two bedroom facilities, with a focus on autonomous living, but done in such a way that the apartments are clustered close together, which addresses many of the concerns.

In regard to how we might bring forward age-friendly standards, it is important for us not to be too prescriptive around the boundaries. If we were able to bring in some key principles and values, and some goal-based dimensions, that could allow the creativity and innovation of designers to respond to it without being constrained by too much red tape.

Ms Corona Joyce: We would reiterate the point just made in terms of not being too prescriptive as to the specifics and also, coming back full circle to the initial presentation, we would point out that we are not dealing with a homogenous group. The needs of one couple or individual may be very different from another, and for that reason we need to have a variety of housing options available.

To come back to the Deputy's earlier point that information on options is not available, we are hearing daily there is a need for increased choice and that the information is not solid regarding what is there at the moment.

Mr. Gerard Scully: There is an information deficit across a range of topics, grants and entitlements. One issue that has not been raised, and I do not know if it is for this committee or another, is that of housing stock being left idle because of the fair deal scheme, in particular the rules regarding renting property under the fair deal, which is an issue for many families. This is the cause of many houses lying idle and deteriorating, and it needs to be looked at.

Mr. Seán Moynihan: With regard to people not being aware of what is available in the community, in some ways the community has changed, with services online and fewer of them delivered in the community. People like us are trying to reimagine the community by tapping into volunteer support. Our aim in the next few years is ultimately to increase to some 9,000 volunteers to support older people so those supports and that information is available on a one-to-one basis, and to leverage what already exists while campaigning or working with partners to get other services in place.

Housing with Support, which comes under Rebuilding Ireland, is one designated project to which we are the supplier. The Departments of Health, and Housing, Planning and Local Government have worked very hard, but it has taken three years to get to a point of agreement on how it will be built and the standards. The housing agencies are now trying to produce a report on a model that can be replicated.

As an approved housing body, we are one of the 16 agencies that are Housing Finance Agency-approved. The way it currently works is that we have to identify the site and purchase it, and there is a huge amount of investment and work to be done to get something across the line. Many people are working to smooth all of that but we still need more consolidation. While I am avoiding the word "bureaucracy" on purpose because there are many people who work very hard in this area and are doing their best, there certainly needs to be support for those

individuals to push forward. This is why we come back to having demand-type numbers so we can look by area and say what are the needs for clusters of housing for older people per area. The Department of Education and Skills recently announced it has the statistics on the growth in the number of children, so it knows in advance to put schools in place. We have no such system in regard to the demand for housing and it is ultimately about reimagining the resources available and how we plan. The development in Dún Laoghaire that was just described sounds exactly like what we want for every housing estate. Regardless of who is the developer, whether it is public, private or an AHB, it should be built to represent the demographics of the area and allow people to age in their own community and move around the corner if they so choose.

On the age-friendly issue, money is always an issue but when we break it down by average build cost, it is probably €7,000 per unit. If something has a life span of 40 years, and as proposed by Mr. Lynch, there are ways around finding that €7,000 per unit. In that case, when people look back they will realise we planned well, we looked to the future and we looked to the next generation of older people, as well as this generation, which we are trying to support.

Deputy Eoin Ó Broin: That is somewhat less than the average adaptation grant that is paid out by local authorities.

Chairman: The trouble is that the funding comes from different mechanisms so there is a bit of work to do around that.

I thank all the witnesses for attending the committee this morning. I really hope that this is an ongoing engagement. All members of the committee want to see action fairly quickly on this issue although it may take a while to come to fruition and for people to see what is being done. We welcome the ongoing engagement and the witnesses' time here this morning. I thank them for that.

I propose that the committee seek written submissions from Home Instead, and if there are any other organisations that members would like to include then I ask that the members email Fiona to let her know.

The joint committee adjourned at 2.20 p.m. until 9.30 a.m on Thursday, 19 April 2018.