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Age-Friendly Bandon? An Assessment of Bandon's Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Using the World Health Organisation Guidelines on Age-Friendly Cities

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CARL Research Project

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Name and year of course:	Master of Social Work Year 2
Date completed:	18th April 2012

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- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers (www.livingknowledge.org).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The World Health Organisation introduced the concept of age-friendly cities in 2005. It is based on the notion of active ageing whereby an age-friendly city adapts its environment, services, organisations and policies to support its citizens to participate, be healthy and feel secure. The Network of Social Groups, in collaboration with University College Cork Community and Academic Research Links, engaged in this community based research study to evaluate the age-friendliness of Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings.

METHODOLOGY

This was a community based research study conducted collaboratively by academic researchers and community members to solve a community issue. A participatory research framework was employed in this study meaning the research was carried out with and by local people using local perspectives to answer the research questions. Research data was collected by local community members through their photographs of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings. They then analysed these photographs in focus groups. Photographs allowed local settings to become visible while the focus groups ensured collective reflection and dialogue about the age-friendliness of Bandon's environment.

RESULTS

This study suggests that some aspects of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings are age-friendly, such as the river setting, outdoor seating and location of services. The co-researchers also suggested that other aspects of Bandon's environment need improvement in order to become more age-friendly. They highlighted the negative effects that high traffic volumes, poor driver/pedestrian relationships, poorly maintained footpaths and perceptions of safety can have on their use of the town. The co-researchers felt strongly about the positive impact of improving Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings and highlighted the benefits of an age-friendly town for all citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes a number of recommendations for upgrades to Bandon's environment, footpaths, traffic, safety, buildings and services. This study also recommends the creation of an age-friendly forum in Bandon town. This forum would promote action towards creating an age-friendly Bandon including consultation with relevant agencies to upgrade the town as suggested by this study. Finally this study recommends the submission of these research results to local government leaders, local business leaders, local decision makers and local agencies to advocate for the creation of age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings.

AUTHOR'S CONCLUSIONS

This research study was created by local people using their local knowledge to create solutions for change in their community. The role of this author was to facilitate this process. The research process was one of learning for both the author and the local community involved and it is hoped the research results will lead to real age-friendly changes in Bandon town.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank Betty Smith, the Network of Social Groups researcher for her significant work on this study. This was research conducted in partnership, made easier by Betty's considerable support and input. I would like to give sincere thanks the co-researchers of this study who volunteered to take photographs and speak candidly about their local town. This research would not have been possible without their contribution, which was the core of this study. I would like to thank the Network of Social Groups for giving me the opportunity to undertake this research and in particular, Martin Scully, Community Worker HSE, for his support and guidance. Thanks to the UCC Community and Academic Research Links for giving me the opportunity to undertake a community based research study, a great learning experience and one that I thoroughly enjoyed. A sincere thanks to my tutor, Dr. Kenneth Burns for his guidance, support and excellent advice throughout this study and his continual availability during the process. Finally I would like to thank my family, friends and classmates who advised, assisted and motivated me throughout the research process.

ABSTRACT

Where we live, the physical, social and cultural environment impacts hugely on how we live. An age-friendly community provides access to public transport, outdoor spaces and buildings, appropriate housing, community support and health services. It also supports people to be active participants in society and provides greater opportunities for civic participation and employment. This study evaluates the age-friendliness of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings. It does this by harnessing the knowledge and skills of local community members to assess the age-friendly supports and challenges of Bandon's physical environment. Members of the community photographed the town's environment and then discussed these images to highlight the impact of age-friendly features and difficulties on their daily lives. This research suggests that while Bandon's environment does have age-friendly aspects, it also requires improvements to become more age-friendly and accessible for its citizens. It highlights that high traffic volumes, poor driver/pedestrian relationships, poorly maintained footpaths and perceptions of safety all impact negatively on the community member's use of the town. It concludes that age-friendly planning benefits all members of a community by facilitating accessibility, mobility and involvement of people, of all ages, for the duration of their lifetimes.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 TITLE

Age-Friendly Bandon? An Assessment of Bandon's Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Using the World Health Organisation Guidelines on Age-Friendly Cities.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

"One of the greatest achievements of the last century is that we are living longer than ever before" (Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland, 2010, p.3). Ageing well throughout the life-course, in a way that feels productive is every person's aim and is worthy of attention in today's society (Russell, 2011). An age-friendly town allows people to age well by supporting opportunities to participate, be healthy and feel secure. The World Health Organisation (hereafter WHO) (2007) defines an age-friendly community as one in which its physical, social and cultural environments are accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capabilities. Furthermore, with an emphasis on enablement, an age-friendly community anticipates users with different capabilities and is thus friendly for all ages (Plouffe and Kalache, 2010).

The Network of Social Groups (hereafter the Network) comprises representatives from eight social groups for older adults located in the mid to west Cork area (Ballinspittle, Bandon, Crookstown, Kilbrittain, Newcestown and Innishannon). These social groups have been active in their local communities for the past 10 to 16 years and involve over three hundred older people across the groups. In 2005, they formed a network in the belief that there is strength in togetherness and adopted a collective and pro-active approach to sourcing the supports, facilities and resources necessary to ensure that older people in local communities are enabled to have a good quality of life (HSE South, 2008). In 2008, the Network commissioned a research report, *Doing it our Way* (HSE South, 2008), to identify the needs of older people living in the region. The results of this research led to a number of community initiatives and supports being implemented by the Network itself.

In 2011, the Network looked at the World Health Organisation (2007) *Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide* to investigate the possibility of creating age-friendly communities in their region. The Network,

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through Betty Smith (hereafter Network researcher) and Martin Scully, Community Worker HSE (hereafter Network representative) contacted University College Cork Community and Academic Research Links (hereafter UCC CARL) service, to conduct collaborative research in their community. The UCC CARL (formerly Science Shop) is a partnership of students, university and community members who together engage in research to solve a community issue (Strand *et al*., 2003).

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The concept of age-friendly cities and communities was introduced by the WHO through their *Global Age-Friendly Cities Project* (hereafter Cities Project) (2007). The concept developed from WHO's active ageing framework (2002), where active ageing is seen as a process of increasing possibilities for participation, health and security in order to improve quality of life as people age (Novek *et al.*, 2011). The Cities Project subsequently published *Global Age-friendly Cities Guide* (WHO, 2007) which provides a checklist of core age-friendly features of a city or town. These age-friendly features identify eight domains as key aspects necessary for an age-friendly community:

(WHO, 2007)

Following an initial discussion between the Network representatives and UCC CARL on the feasible size and scale of this study, the Network chose to focus on the age-friendliness of Bandon, the largest town in their region. More specifically, the Network decided to concentrate this study on Bandon's physical environment, that is, it's outdoor spaces and buildings. A town's physical environment can have a significant impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of it's residents, therefore the creation of an age-friendly urban landscape is a central component of a positive approach to ageing (Lui *et al.*, 2009). Ensuring that Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings are age-friendly in order to support the active ageing of its community is a priority for the Network.

Droichead na Banndan, meaning the bridge of the Bandon river, is located 30km west of Cork city (Bandon.ie, 2012). The town was founded circa 1604 as an English focus for plantation settlers and today performs an important service function to a wide hinterland as well as being the key gateway to West Cork (Cork County Council, 2011). The 2006 Census recorded a population of 5,822 for Bandon (ibid, 2011). Bandon has a strong civic society in the form of a Town Council, Chamber of Commerce, Bandon Business Group, Bandon Action Group and Business Association, all of which actively promote the amenities and business life of the town (Bandon.ie, 2012). There are 3 social groups for older people in Bandon providing opportunities for social interaction.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

In Ireland, the number of people over 65 (around 11% of the population for decades) is rising and is projected to stand at 20% of the population by 2036 (Ageing Well Network, 2012a). Irish government policy has a vision of Ireland which provides the supports, where required, to allow older people to maintain their health and wellbeing, together with living active full lives, in an independent manner, in their own homes and communities for as long as possible (Government of Ireland, 2006). An age-friendly community supports this ageing-in-place policy as it provides the opportunities for people to live full active lives and also enhances the quality of life of its citizens by optimising their opportunities for health, participation and security.

A key feature of creating an age-friendly community is that older adults are an integral part of the decisions, policies and planning. WHO, (2007, p.7) describe it as a "bottom-up participatory approach" whereby older people are involved as full partners at all stages of assessing a community's age-friendliness. The Network chose to undertake a community based research study in order to involve local community members as active partners in assessing their local town's outdoor spaces and buildings. Community based research is collaborative research conducted by academic researchers and community members to solve a community issue (Stoecker, 2002) with an emphasis on locally defined priorities and local perspectives (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). The benefits of this local community involvement are numerous. Local knowledge is utilised to provide solutions to local problems thereby producing relevant results to effect change. Community members who participate in solving local issues can also become more confident that they can make a difference in their own communities (Strand *et al.*, 2003). Finally the dissemination of results can also enable local community members to

make important connections with decision makers and organisations that can effect change in the community.

From a social work perspective, working with a local community on a research study to solve a local issue provided rich learning opportunities. This was a group of people who chose to come together to act directly on improving the environment of their local town. The group's strength and influence lay in its shared experiences, understandings and hopes for building better outdoor spaces and buildings in Bandon. The concept of community social work practice supported this research as the study involved community members identifying their need and working to meet this need, while the researchers were primarily facilitators. Community social work skills were used to provide local people with knowledge and opportunities to bring about their own changes to Bandon, to value their skills and knowledge, to nurture the research process being undertaken and to link the research to the long term vision of an age-friendly Bandon.

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The Network's aim is to understand the changes required to Bandon town to create more age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings. This understanding will come from local people photographing the age-friendly features and challenges of Bandon's physical environment. Through this process, the local community members will highlight what they believe to be the areas for improvement to the town's outdoor spaces and buildings. Kolb (2002), states that creating research results from a local community process may improve the implementation and sustainability of any solutions or actions. The aim of the Network is to produce practical, relevant and valid suggestions to increase the age-friendliness of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research for this community based research study was undertaken by volunteers from the Bandon locality. The group formed for the specific purposes of undertaking this research study. The group selected to be called the Social Observation Group for the study. Chapter Two provides more detail on this group and the research process. The research questions to be answered in this research are:

1. What are the Social Observation Group's views and experiences of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings?

2. What does the Social Observation Group believe are the areas of improvement required to make Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings more age-friendly?

3. Does the Social Observation Group believe that Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings are age-friendly?

1.7 CONCLUSION

The notion that the environment in which people live profoundly impacts their lives has an extensive history (Menec *et al.*, 2011). Physical environments that are age-friendly can make the difference between independence and dependence for all people. An age-friendly community is one in which people can participate, be healthy and feel secure. Local community members of Bandon, in collaboration with the Network and UCC CARL, wish to create an age-friendly town. This community based research study forms part of this goal and aims to understand what needs to happen in Bandon town to create age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings. This understanding will come from the perspectives of local people, illustrated through their photographs of the town. In playing a lead role in this research, local people are taking action to create an age-friendly town in which they can age well.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter Two will examine the research methodology, theoretical frameworks and research methods engaged in this research. The research roles played by the Network researcher and the Social Observation Group will be discussed. Limitations and the ethical considerations of the research will also be considered.

Chapter Three will provide a review of the literature relevant to this research. The concept and features of age-friendly communities will be discussed along with their influence on the well-being of residents. Government policy and positive discourse on ageing will then be considered.

Chapter Four will present the findings and analyse the data. It is split into two sections so as to allow the co-researchers to illustrate their views, uninterrupted. This will then be followed by a discussion of the data using relevant literature.

Chapter Five will draw conclusions from the themes analysed in Chapter Four. It will make research recommendations for the Network based on the co-researchers views. It will also reflect on the research process and make conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to evaluate Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings, against the World Health Organisation's (hereafter WHO) age-friendly guidelines. This chapter will outline the methodology and the theoretical framework employed in this community based research study. The study employed a participatory approach to the research design, which provided a framework for all research decisions. A variety of data collection methods were employed to collect, analyse and interpret the research findings. An interpretivist framework was employed to guide the analysis of the research data while the social construction of ageing was considered to give greater understanding to the findings. Finally this chapter concludes with an examination of the limitations of the study and a discussion of the ethical issues associated with the research.

2.1.1 Use of 'I'

The first person pronoun has been used in limited sections of this report to indicate the elements of negotiation and decision-making involved in this study. The choice to use 'I' was located in the fact that this was a community based research study involving collaborative research roles completed by the Network researcher, the co-researchers and I. In order to make clear the partnership approach taken, the use of 'I' was employed in a limited number of contexts. Strand *et al.* (2003) argue the need for connectedness and relationship building in community based research whereby the academic researchers are required to produce and share knowledge with a community. Uncovering quality data requires engagement and partnership with the community (ibid, 2003). The use of 'I' is indicative of the partnership element of this study.

2.2 QUALITATIVE, PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the framework used in research to bring together, frame, support and direct the activities and processes involved in the study (Carey, 2009). It is the research strategy that provides guidelines on how research is to be conducted (Sarantakaos, 2004). Community based research is collaborative research conducted by academic researchers and community members to solve a

community issue (Stoecker, 2002). A central principle of community based research is participation whereby those in the community work in full and equal participation with the university in conducting the research. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) define participatory research as research carried out with and by local people with an emphasis on locally defined priorities and perspectives. It is based on the idea that local people are experts on their communities and understand the actions required to improve their quality of life (Novek *et al.,* 2011).

The Network researcher and Network representative chose a participatory research framework to guide this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, participatory research requires that the research focus is one that the community has identified as important to their own agenda (Strand *et al.*, 2003). In this instance, the Network had established that creating an age-friendly community was something they wanted to work towards. The Network, through the social groups it represents, have access to a large number of community members who have a vast amount of local knowledge and lived experience. Therefore harnessing this experiential knowledge was an important aim of the Network and one which was consistent with the WHO's principle of involving "older people as full partners at all stages" (2007, p. 11). A participatory research approach involves the use of community social work skills that value and encourage local skills and knowledge and build the confidence of the local people undertaking the research.

Qualitative research concentrates on understanding meanings, perceptions, experiences and situations, that is, the lived experiences of people (Richie and Lewis, 2003). While quantitative research is the systematic investigation of social situations via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques, qualitative research examines the construction of the social world through the views and perspectives of its participants (Punch, 2005). This research study aimed to evaluate Bandon's physical environment based on community members views, opinions and lived experiences of the town. Therefore qualitative research was deemed by the Network as the most appropriate type of research to conduct.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory offers a set of ideas that link together logical arguments which help us explain, conceptualise and understand what it is we are doing and why (Carey, 2009). The role of theory in qualitative research is to untangle complicated data and provide meaning to complex themes (ibid, 2009).

Epistemology, the theory of knowledge, relates to the different forms and types of knowledge that exist in the social world (Carey, 2009). Interpretivism, an epistemological school of theory, attempts to uncover the meaning and reality of people's experiences. It seeks to make sense of the opinions, emotional responses and attitudes expressed by the local community, connect these to their behaviours and actions and then place their views and conducts into perspective (Carey, 2009). The purpose of this study is to explore the local people's views and perspectives on Bandon's physical environment, how this environment encourages or inhibits their activities and as a result evaluate the age-friendliness of this environment. Thus an interpretive framework will be used in this study to evaluate Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings based on the perspectives of the local community.

Ontology, reflects the nature of social reality and what researchers understand reality to be like (Carey, 2009). Social constructionism, an ontological stance, focuses on the belief that reality is constructed, that what people perceive as reality is what they have constructed through experiences and interpretations (Sarantakaos, 2004). As this study centres around age-friendly guidelines, the social construction of ageing will be considered. The social construction of ageing can be defined as the taken-for-granted assumptions that are created by societies and filter through to shape personal attitudes about ageing (Powell and Hendricks, 2009). During the 20th century ageing was socially constructed primarily by the creation of age-related retirement. This policy influenced the notion that past a certain age an individual's economic and social worth is diminished and contributed to age discrimination (Pierce and Timonen, 2010). However, in the last decade, ageing has been instead underpinned by discourses of better active lifestyles and new periods of opportunity. Organisations representing older people have promoted positive constructions of ageing and supported initiatives such as Positive Ageing Week (Age Action Ireland, 2012) and the Bealtaine Festival (Age & Opportunity, 2012). This study will utilise the social construction to give greater understanding to the research findings.

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2.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The ethos of community based participatory research is that the research seeks to engage the community in all aspects of the research process (Strand *et al.*, 2003). The Network researcher and I looked to the principles of a qualitative, participatory approach to guide our choice of data collection and analysis methods. Based on a suggestion by the university supervisor, we agreed on the concept of asking local community members to take photographs of the Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings to depict their experiences of the town's environment and afterwards discuss in focus groups.

Photographs allow local settings to become visible as local people take photographs to show their perspectives on the research question and their experiences and understandings of the local context (Kolb, 2008). Photographs are particularly suited to capturing the physical environment which was the essence of this study. Also, photographs of Bandon's age-friendly challenges mean that real issues in the town become visible and can act as compelling information to engage relevant agencies in discussions for future change. Focus groups were then held to elicit information from the local community about what they had represented in their photographs. Focus groups were selected as the use of a group process allows collective reflection and dialogue related to Bandon's age-friendliness. The use of focus groups allowed a richer deeper discussion of the effect that Bandon's environment had on the lives of the community members and allowed differences and similarities in perceptions within the group, to be explored.

2.4.1 Sample Selection

The Network representatives publicised the research in the Bandon community and with Bandon's social groups. They highlighted that the study would involve local people taking photographs within their community and discussing these photographs afterwards during focus groups. As a result, seven people indicated their willingness to assist with the collection and the analysis of data. Therefore the volunteers were a self-selected group of adults (hereafter the co-researchers) who either lived in or made regular use of Bandon town. Of this sample, five people were aged 65+, one person was aged 55+ and one person was aged under-55. Four of the co-researchers were female and three were male. Three people lived in Bandon town while four lived in surrounding townlands, with Bandon being their local town. The researchers selected to call themselves the Social Observation group.

2.4.2 Data Collection

An initial meeting was held with the co-researchers to formally introduce the research study, discuss the research questions and agree a framework for data collection. It was agreed at this session that the WHO (2007) age-friendly guidelines would act as a general guide on the core features of age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings in Bandon. This was translated into a journal guide[1], co-designed by the Network researcher and I. The co-researchers had three weeks to take photographs of Bandon town. In order to limit the amount of data, the group were asked to take a maximum of thirty photographs. The co-researchers selected the subjects of their photographs within the broad parameters of the journal guide. This allowed the co-researchers to select aspects of the town that were relevant to their personal experiences.

2.4.3 Data Analysis

Focus groups were then held to allow the co-researchers to analyse their photographs and attach their experiences and understandings to the images. By capturing what was meaningful and relevant to the co-researchers, the research complied with both community based participatory research principles and the interpretivist goal of understanding a social setting from the perspective of those who experience it (Strand *et al.,* 2003). A selection of the photographs were compiled into flip chart sheets[2] and ordered in similar sequence to the journal guide. The focus groups were co-facilitated by the Network researcher and I with the assistance of a focus group guide[3].

The focus groups were recorded by dictaphone, with the permission of the co-researchers and subsequently transcribed. These transcripts were reviewed by the Network researcher and I for key themes linking the co-researchers. This process of thematic analysis identifies themes as described by the participants and so avoids interviewer bias (Carey, 2009). The themes that emerged were then assessed and linked to the WHO (2007) age-friendly guidelines and literature uncovered by the literature review.

A literature review was completed during and after the data collection phases. EBSCO was used as the main search engine for literature on age-friendly communities. A search for the terms '*age-friendly*' and *'livable community*' of all peer-reviewed articles reported 52 results. Of these results, 19 articles were chosen based on their relevance taking words such as '*community*', '*city*', '*urban features*' and

[1] See Appendix 1
[2] See Appendix 2
[3] See Appendix 3

'*environment*' into account during this process. A UCC library search using the keyword '*age-friendly*' and *'livable community*' yielded 6 results. Of these, 1 publication was relevant. A search of websites of leading ageing research institutes yielded 12 results, of which 7 were used. The literature review provided a background knowledge of Irish and international research and policy on age-friendly environments. Also the literature review allowed sense to be made of the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

It is acknowledged that there were limitations to this research study. The sample population was recruited from Bandon's social groups and active community members. Bryman (2008) terms this a non-probability sample whereby certain individuals have a greater chance of participating than others. Therefore active older people in the community were well represented while the least active and most marginalised of the community may not have been represented.

The participatory element of this research also held limitations as it was an evolving process throughout the research. While the co-researchers were involved from agreeing the research questions right through to presenting the results in the public domain, provision was not made to involve them in writing this report. The sharing of research tasks throughout this study was decided through negotiation between the Network researcher and I. Our understanding of participatory research developed over the course of the research process. Thus it was only after the research data had been collected and analysed by the co-researchers, that consideration was given to writing the research report. It was at this stage that we realised the omission of the co-researchers and therefore decided that the Network researcher would review, comment and contribute to all aspects of the report prior to publication.

2.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The core component of qualitative social research is ethics. Research ethics refer to the rules of good conduct (Carey 2009). Prior to commencing this research, the University College Cork (2010) *Code of Research Conduct* and the CORU (2010) *Framework Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics* were reviewed to ensure all relevant aspects were considered. The principal ethical considerations to be addressed are that participants are thoroughly informed about the aims, methods and possible uses of

the research, what their participation in the research involves and what risks, if any, are involved; the confidentiality of information and the anonymity of participants must be respected; participants must participate in a voluntary manner and; harm to participants must be avoided (Silverman, 2011).

As this community based participatory research was conducted in partnership with the local community, research ethics were an important feature of the process and were discussed and agreed with the Network and co-researchers throughout. The purpose, research methods and uses of the research were discussed and agreed at the initial meeting with the co-researchers, as were the research tasks required of the group and any possible risks. Each researcher was given a participatory consent form and information sheet[4] to read, sign and return at the focus groups. This consent form outlined that participation was voluntary and that the co-researchers could opt out at any stage without consequence. Anonymity of all co-researchers within the report findings was assured however there were limits to the research confidentiality as the study was completed in partnership with University College Cork Community and Academic Research Links (hereafter UCC CARL). This report will be issued to the Network on completion and will also be available for the public to view on the UCC CARL website. As the Network of Social Groups is identified in this report and as the co-researcher group is small, some aspects or circumstances detailed in the findings may enable the co-researchers to be recognised. This was explained to the co-researchers with an assurance that any unnecessary infringement of privacy would be avoided when writing up the report. Finally, ownership of the visual data and focus group transcripts would remain with the Network. The Network and the Researcher/University College Cork would jointly own this dissertation.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The core principles of community based research guided this study. Social action in the form of creating an age-friendly Bandon is the overall aim of the research. Collaboration between the Network, co-researchers and the university was continuous and ongoing over a number of months. Multiple methods of discovery led to photographs becoming the data collection method and focus groups performing the analysis. Encompassing these principles was a participatory framework whereby the aim to evaluate Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings was addressed using local community knowledge, abilities and skills. Including community members in designing, undertaking and analysing

[4] See Appendix 4

this research was essential in order for the results to be owned by and relevant to Bandon town. The value of research findings lies in their potential to bring real improvements to the quality of life of the community. Photographs captured visually the age-friendly challenges created by Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings while focus groups allowed meaning to be attached to these challenges. These findings presented in Chapter Four produce compelling information for relevant decision makers when planning future changes to Bandon's environment. Prior to discussion of the findings, Chapter Three will discuss relevant Irish and international research and policy on age-friendly communities.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF AGE-FRIENDLY LITERATURE AND POLICY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organisation (hereafter WHO) introduced the concept of age-friendly cities with the launch of the *Global Age-Friendly Cities Project* (2007). This chapter looks at the evolution of the age-friendly concept from the *Global Age-Friendly Cities Project* (WHO, 2007) to Ireland's *Age-Friendly County Programme* (Ageing Well Network, 2011). Research studies on age-friendly cities highlight the influence of community characteristics on the health, social participation and security of its residents. This chapter looks the research literature on age-friendly environments and their impact on community members. Finally this chapter looks at current Irish policy on ageing and at the current positive discourse on ageing.

3.2 EVOLUTION OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The *Global Age-Friendly Cities Project* (WHO, 2007) highlighted the significance to older people of access to public transport, outdoor spaces and buildings, along with the need for appropriate housing, community support and health services. It also highlighted the need to support older people to be active participants in society and to provide greater opportunities for civic participation and employment. The project resulted in the publication of *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (WHO, 2007) and the creation of a *Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities* (WHO, 2010). In Ireland, an *Age-Friendly County Programme (*Ageing Well Network, 2011) was developed to create age-friendly counties nationally.

3.2.1 WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities Project

In 2005, WHO (2007) launched their *Global Age-Friendly Cities Project* in 35 cities from developed and developing countries around the world. In 33 cities (including Dundalk, County Louth), persons aged 60 years and older, participated in focus group research to explore what makes cities age-friendly (WHO, 2007). The findings were subsequently compiled into the *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (ibid, 2007) to assist cities in becoming age-friendly. The essential component of this research was the bottom-up participatory approach ensuring that older people were involved in expressing their situation

to inform the guide. This participatory approach was reflected in this research study on Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings.

3.2.2 WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities

In 2010, the WHO launched its *Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities* to connect and support cities around the world that wish to follow the age-friendly cities approach. The network gives members training and support from WHO and the opportunity to share information and experiences with other members (Parry, 2010). Many individual cities joined the Network including Dundalk, Co. Louth and WHO has also established agreements with the Irish Ageing Well Network, the French government and the Slovenian Network of Age-friendly Cities to develop associated national programmes (Vogel, 2010)

The first international conference for the *Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities* (WHO, 2010) took place in Ireland in September 2011. This conference launched the Dublin Declaration of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, which was signed by over 40 cities from across the world including Dublin and 9 counties in Ireland. By signing the Dublin Declaration, the participating cities and counties demonstrated their commitment to action and progressing the principles that underpin the Age-Friendly Cities movement.

3.2.3 Ireland's Age-Friendly County Programme

Ireland's *Age-Friendly County Programme* (Ageing Well Network, 2011) is a national initiative aimed at making local Irish cities, towns and communities age-friendly. The *Age-Friendly County Programme* is a key initiative of the Ageing Well Network, an autonomous group of leaders, heads of organisations and strategic thinkers who share a vision of "an Ireland that is one of the best countries in the world in which to grow old" (Ageing Well Network, 2012b). Their core work is funded by Atlantic Philanthropies. The *Age-Friendly County Programme* is currently being rolled out through a 'lead' county in three regions of Ireland: Kilkenny, South (includes County Cork), Louth, North East and Kildare, Mid-Leinster. Each county's programme is led by a county based alliance of senior managers across public, private and voluntary organisations as well as representatives from three forums - older people, service providers and business. This alliance produces an age-friendly county strategy that details specific areas of action required to create an age-friendly county. On 10th April 2012, this study contacted the regional programme manager for the South region regarding an age-friendly programme

in County Cork. She stated that work should commence in Cork during 2012 but no contact has yet been made with the City and County Managers who would be the lead stakeholders in the programme.

3.3 FEATURES OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

3.3.1 Relevant Studies

The *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide* (WHO, 2007) provides the core features of age-friendly cities including outdoor spaces and buildings. Three studies (Kochera and Bright, 2005; Hwang *et al.*, 2008; Friedman *et al.*, 2011) conducted in the United States on livable communities link the influence of neighbourhood characteristics to the health, social participation and quality of life of older adults. A UK study (McGarry and Morris, 2011) published its strategy for an age-friendly Manchester and discuss the concept of a lifetime neighbourhood where a person's age does not affect their chance of having a good quality of life. A Canadian study (Novek *et al.,* 2011) examining age-friendly community characteristics in four communities in Canada, discusses the methods of research as opposed to the results and is referred to in Chapter Two of this study. Ireland's *Age-Friendly County Programme* (Ageing Well Network, 2011) has published strategies for Counties Louth, Kilkenny and Kildare, which map the priority areas of need and how these will be met. As each town has unique age-friendly features, challenges, barriers and gaps, qualitative research involving older people is required to assess a town's age-friendliness. This research study will provide such an assessment and at a later stage, could be dovetailed into the *Age-Friendly County Programme* for Cork.

3.3.2 Impact of Age-Friendly Environments

Where we live, the physical, social and cultural environment, influences hugely on how we live and to what extent we participate and engage in our local community. This study looks at the impact of Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings on the lives of local community members. Age-friendly physical environments can make the difference between independence and dependence for all people (WHO, 2007). A safe pedestrian environment, easy access to shops and convenient location of green spaces are important elements for the use of a community by its residents. Well-lit streets and pedestrian traffic lights have significant impact on mobility and quality of life of people living in the community (Burton *et al.,* 2011).

3.3.3 Influence on Health

An increasing amount of evidence suggests that engaging in physical activity has beneficial effects on the physical and psychological health and overall quality of life of all people (WHO, 2002). A system of smooth, well-maintained, easy to access footpaths and walkways provide opportunities for people to walk in their community. Safe green spaces and parks provide pleasant and affordable opportunities to be active. Borst *et al.,* (2008) highlight that the presence of traffic and pedestrian infrastructure, local shops and services and community attractiveness influence the amount of physical activity undertaken by inhabitants of urban areas. They also state that inhabitants of highly walkable communities were more physically active in contrast to inhabitants of lesser walkable communities (ibid, 2008). Thus age-friendly physical environments can influence the health of community members.

3.3.4 Influence on Participation

The physical accessibility of public spaces, services and facilities plays a role in determining whether people make regular use of these amenities. Buildings with access ramps, wide-doorways and seating areas, located close to where people live encourage their use while attractive public spaces offer opportunities for social engagement. Kochera and Bright (2005) highlight that residents with less positive perceptions of their community tend to have lower levels of community engagement. Thus the design of the built environment impacts the ability of persons to be integrated into their community, to participate in activities and to use community facilities. The inclusion of local people in the evaluation of Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings promotes such participation and engagement and means that the solutions are relevant to the town.

3.3.5 Influence on Security

Friedman *et al.,* (2011) state that safety is a significant influence on the quality of life of older adults. Feeling safe in the physical and social environment is an important factor in sustaining a person's independence and engagement in their community. A sense of safety can arise from the availability of well-maintained footpaths and stairs that have railings. It can also arise from safe pedestrian crossings with drivers giving way to pedestrians. The UK Department of Transport (2011) plan for *Shared Space* in their streets, a concept that reduces the dominance of vehicles, mainly through lower speeds and urging drivers to behave more accommodatingly towards foot traffic. The UK charity Living Streets (2010) promotes *Living Streets* which are safe, attractive streets where the needs of people are prioritised over traffic, making walking the natural choice for short journeys. The iimpression of safety is also an important feature in defining the livability of a community (Hwang *et al*., 2008). Feeling safe

in one's environment strongly influences people's willingness to walk around their local community, which then affects their independence, physical health, social integration and emotional wellbeing (WHO, 2007). Therefore the creation of safe physical and social spaces is an important aspect of an age-friendly town.

3.3.6 Influence on all ages

If a town is age-friendly for older people, it is age-friendly for all people. By creating an age-friendly environment for older adults, the community actually accomplishes considerably more (Hwang *et al.,* 2008). Many measures that make a town age-friendly, like sufficient outdoor seating, accessible public toilets and safe pedestrian crossings, can benefit all age groups. The principles of Universal Design (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2012), which underlie age-friendly communities, concern planning, which caters for people of all ages. Age-friendly planning benefits all members of a community by facilitating accessibility, mobility and involvement of people of all ages for the duration of their lifetimes.

3.4 IRISH POLICY ON AGEING

Currently there is no specific strategy or policy for ageing in Ireland. The most significant national policy exclusively dedicated to older people remains *The Years Ahead: A Policy for the Elderly* (Department of Health, 1988) published in 1988. As a public policy, its perspective was on society's obligations to its 'elderly citizens', not on older people's place in Irish society or the contribution they can make. Subsequent policy documents published *(Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You 2001; Towards 2016: Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015; National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016)* were age-related and addressed the needs of Irish society as a whole.

3.4.1 National Positive Ageing Strategy

In 2007, the *Programme for Government 2007-2012* (Department of the Taoiseach 2007) stated that a National Positive Ageing Strategy (hereafter NPAS) would be developed to identify the plans that must be implemented to ensure the best quality of life for older people in the Ireland. The publication of a NPAS would focus attention on issues relevant to older people and would ensure coherence and integration in planning across programmes and services for older people in Ireland (Office for Older People, 2010). In 2010, the Office for Older People published *In Our Own Words* (ibid, 2010), a report of the consultation process on the NPAS. There have been no further publications on the NPAS since

this document. The current Irish government, in its Programme for National Recovery 2011-2016 (Department of the Taoiseach, 2011), stated that they would complete and implement the NPAS. This study contacted the Office for Older People on 10th April 2012 which stated that the NPAS is being worked on at the moment with no estimated date of publication available.

3.4.2 Bandon Electoral Area Local Area Plan

The *2011 Bandon Electoral Area Local Area Plan* (Cork County Council, 2011) provides a detailed planning framework for sustainable development in the Bandon electoral area. The plan sets out proposals for the delivery of the physical, social and environmental infrastructure necessary to sustain the communities in the area until 2020 (ibid, 2011). This plan is the blueprint for any work approved and/or completed by Cork County Council on Bandon town and contains proposals for work on pedestrian walkways, traffic management, roads, footpath improvements and revitalisaton of the town centre. A number of these proposals state more detailed appraisal is required in consultation with local groups in the town. The sections of this plan relevant to creating age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings are detailed in Chapter Four.

3.5 POSITIVE DISCOURSE ON AGEING

The increase of interest in age-friendly communities over the past decade indicates a paradigm shift in the public discourse on ageing (Lui *et al.,* 2009). Instead of conceiving older people as an economic burden on society, the new discourse constructs ageing as a positive process and highlights the active roles that older people continue to play in society (WHO, 2011). This new discourse on ageing has redirected policy discussion from economic or welfare issues to matters of social inclusion, engagement and community development. The Irish Government lag behind this new policy discourse however until such time it publishes a National Positive Ageing Strategy. This strategy would acknowledge the contributions made by older people to their families, communities and society and would emphasise the concept that older age is a phase in everyone's life and therefore is everyone's business to address. The *Age-Friendly County Programme* does however provide a mechanism for change in Irish counties while waiting for this policy document to be issued. Irish organisations representing older people such as Age & Opportunity, Older & Bolder and Age Action Ireland are actively involved in demonstrating the potential for positive ageing. These organisations and events such as the *Bealtaine Festival* (Age & Opportunity, 2012), *Positive Ageing Week* (Age Action Ireland,

2012) and the *European Year for Active Ageing* (Europa.eu, 2012) highlight that older people are citizens with a broad range of concerns who still have contributions to make to society.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Positive outcomes for older people include more than physical independence. They include the capability of older people to remain active in their community and to continue to enjoy their desired level of interaction with other people (Kochera and Bright, 2005). Outdoor spaces and buildings all play a key role in how citizens participate and invest in the community around them. Age-friendly environments provide the elements that people need to remain active and socially connected throughout the lifespan. How this plays out in reality will be discussed in the research findings of Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the primary research conducted and interpreted by the Social Observation group. This was a group of seven self-selected adults (hereafter co-researchers) from the Bandon community who agreed to take photographs of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings and then analyse these images during two focus groups. These methods are in keeping with the ethos of community based participatory research whereby local community members engage in research to present their views and perspectives, for the purpose of solving a community issue. In this instance, the Network of Social Groups and the local community wish to create an age-friendly Bandon and so, in this study have assessed the age-friendliness of the town's outdoor spaces and buildings.

The research findings are presented using the World Health Organisation (2007) *Checklist of Essential Features of Age-Friendly Cities* (hereafter the WHO guidelines) as a framework. This is in keeping with the preferred method of presentation of the Network of Social Groups. A selection of photographs is presented here to illustrate the key findings of the co-researchers followed by their analysis of these photographs. This information is then discussed in order to answer the research questions identified in Chapter 1. To preserve anonymity, the co-researchers have been provided with pseudonym names.

4.2 FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to understand the changes required to Bandon town in order for its outdoor spaces and buildings to become more age-friendly. This understanding came from photographs, illustrating the age-friendly strengths and limitations of Bandon's physical environment. This is followed by interpretations of these photographs to demonstrate how Bandon's physical environment affects the co-researchers day to day lives. This data is presented using the core features of age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings, as detailed by the WHO guidelines and summarised in the following table.

http://carl.ucc.ie

Core Features of

Age-friendly Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

4.2.1	Environment
4.2.2	Green spaces & walkways
4.2.3	Outdoor seating
4.2.4	Footpaths
4.2.5	Roads & cycle paths
4.2.6	Traffic
4.2.7	Safety
4.2.8	Buildings
4.2.9	Services
4.2.10	Public toilets & car parks

4.2.1 *Environment*

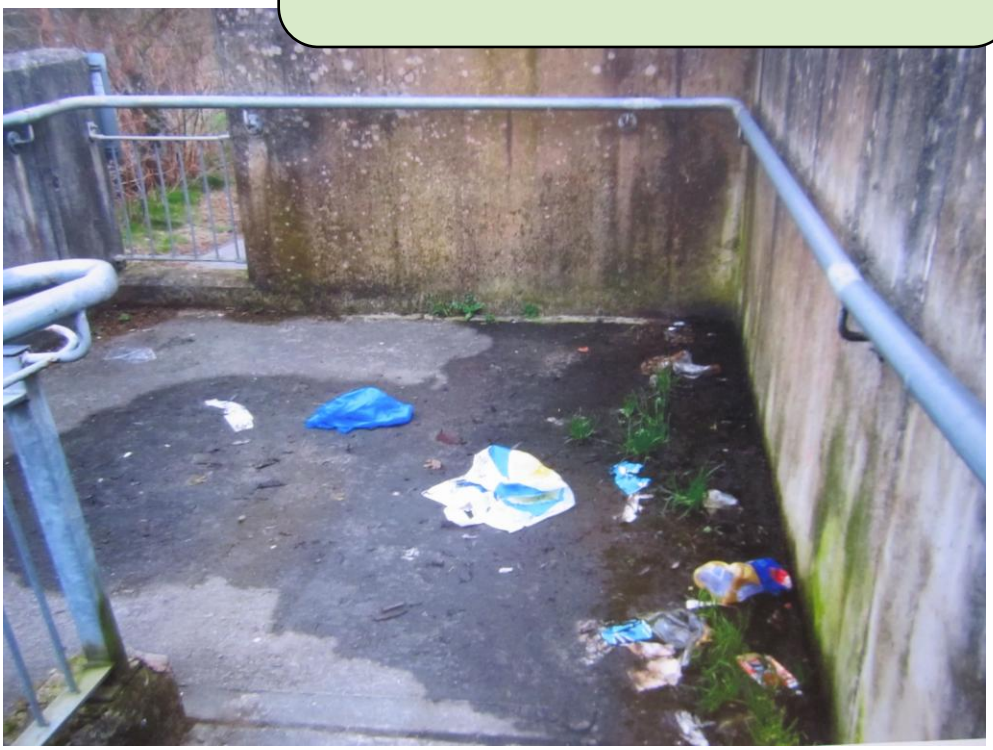

Figure 5: *"there are two [photographs] there with litter by the tonne"* (Ellen)

Figure 5: *"there are two [photographs] there with litter by the tonne"* (Ellen)

The WHO guidelines recommend that public areas are clean and pleasant. While over half of the co-researchers believed that Bandon is quite clean and not generally untidy, they were concerned about litter and dog fouling in certain areas of the town. Four out of seven co-researchers were troubled by the littering of the river walk area beside Lidl[5] with Ellen stating there was *"litter by the tonne"* in that area. Michael believed that *"facilitating with more bins"* while Catherine proposed *"trying to instill in people the importance of civic pride"* as solutions to the issue.

Discussing litter on that part of the river walk led onto three of the co-researchers talking about feeling unsafe in that area with Ellen stating that:

> *I had barely taken a foot down there, and not just the dirt and the filth, but there were people sat down there, most unpleasant characters and I felt totally intimidated.*

[5] See Figure 5 *(Please note the photographs begin at Figure 5 for ease of reading the footnotes)*

Ellen states that she did not go to that part of the river walk again, only to take photographs for this study. Michael agreed stating that *"he would be hesitant to go down there"*. Thus safety in that area of the river walk, as well as littering, would prevent these co-researchers from using that walk.

All the co-researchers felt strongly about *"the contributions of our four legged friends"* (Michael) with a number of photographs being taken of dog fouling. Michael, who walks Bandon daily, stated that:

> *you really don't see the sky, you have to keep looking at the ground and it's a great pity*.

The co-researchers felt that there was a lack of care by dog walkers, which Ellen believed could be addressed by *"a positive education"* on people's responsibility to pick up their dog fouling. However Tom disagreed stating *"you can't teach an old dog new tricks"* in relation to changing the behaviour of some dog-owners. Alice also suggested creating fenced dog walking areas in the town with signs *"please exercise your dogs here"*.

Figure 6: *"it's a lovely part of town...a lovely history"* (Michael)

The historical environment of Bandon was highlighted as important by four of the seven co-researchers. Catherine mentioned the beautiful grounds of Castle Bernard stating *"the history of that castle is fascinating"* while Michael discusses the old market area[6], stating *"it's a lovely part of town...a lovely history".* Alice also highlights the Georgian doorways along Kilbrogan Hill that *"show part of Bandon's history".* All four co-researchers felt that the history of Bandon should be highlighted more in an effort to increase tourist opportunities in the town.

4.2.2 Green Spaces & Walkways

[6] See Figure 6

Figure 7: *"it's a lovely little walk"* (Ellen)

Photographs of the river and the river walks featured strongly in this section with the co-researchers making favourable comments on the river and the positive contribution that it made to the town. Catherine highlighted *"if you were going to stroll...there's some lovely walkways here"*. Four of the co-researchers regularly use the river walk opposite McSwiney Quay[7] with Ellen stating *"it's a lovely little walk".* The WHO guidelines recommend that green spaces in a town are sufficient in number, well-maintained and safe.

[7] See Figure 7

Figure 8: *"a beautiful huge area of greenery"* (Ellen)

Three of the co-researchers discussed the town park[8] with Ellen referring to it as *"a beautiful huge area of greenery"* while Margaret highlighted that it has *"lots of lovely seating in it and little houses to go in out of the rain".* However due to its distance from the town centre, Ellen felt that:

> *an older person would be dependent on being taken there, they are unlikely to be able to walk. It's quite far away, far enough out of town.*

Four of the co-researchers felt that this location would prevent people from walking to it from town due to the distance. Tom wondered *"does the bus service go anywhere near it?"* as a suggestion for access for people.

[8] See Figure 8

Figure 9: *"It's one of the most attractive beauty spots within 40 miles of Cork and it's not exploited"* (Denis)

Three of the co-researchers felt that Bandon's tourist potential could be exploited more with Alice stating *"I mean we have a river running through the town and that is never emphasised".* Denis highlights the beauty of the weir[9] stating *"It's one of the most attractive beauty spots within 40 miles of Cork and it's not exploited".* All of these co-researchers felt that more could be done to promote Bandon as a tourist town including emphasising the historical context of the town.

4.2.3 Outdoor Seating

[9] See Figure 9

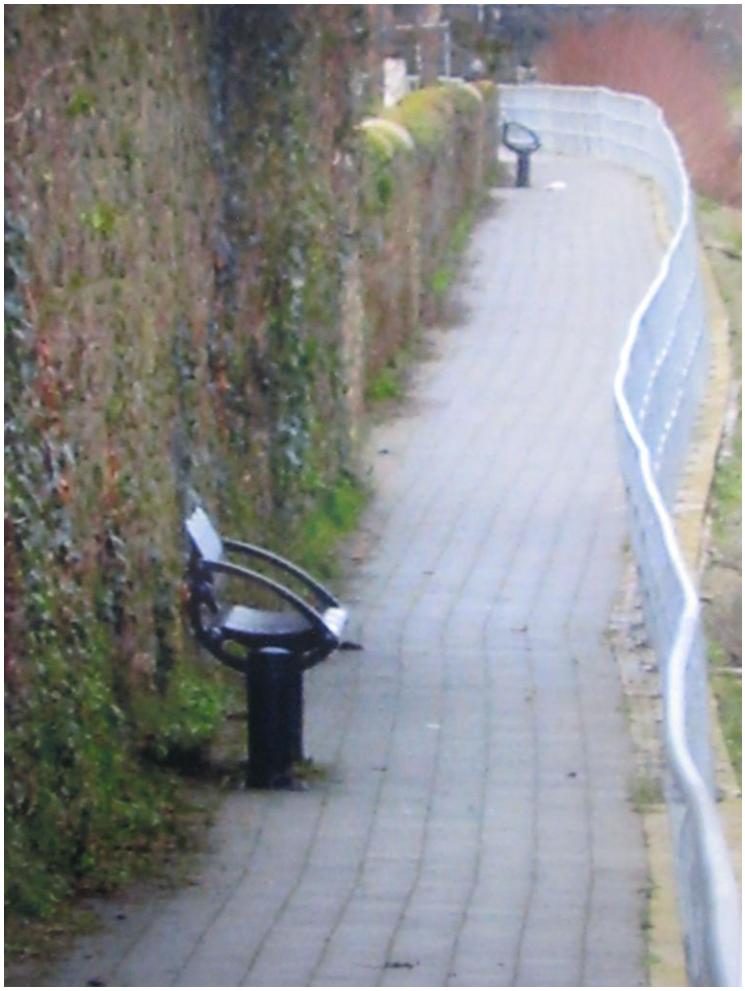

Figure 10: *"they're lovely now to sit down there, it's very relaxing by the river"* (Catherine)

All of co-researchers commented on the large number of outdoor seats available in Bandon town. The WHO guidelines recommend that outdoor seating are sufficient in number, well-maintained and safe. Catherine highlighted the positives of seating by the river:

> *They are very comfortable there on that walkway there...they're lovely now to sit down there, it's very relaxing by the river*[10].

Five of the seven co-researchers felt that the outdoor seats are not used regularly however Margaret pointed out that *"in the summer time you would see people sitting there"* indicating that the use of outdoor seats can be weather dependent. Tom stated that he sees the seat at Howards Court being used

[10] See Figure 10

regularly saying *"I get the impression that people use it as a meeting point"* suggesting the location of outdoor seating is important to its use.

Figure 11: *"on a wet day the water comes flying in there and you get drenched"* (Catherine)

Four of the co-researchers discussed the seating available at the bus stops on the Glasslinn road. Ellen stated that the narrow seat available in the bus stop coming from Cork city is *"quite uncomfortable".* Two of the co-researchers felt that having no seat in the bus stop going to Cork City did not matter as people would generally not be waiting a long time. However Catherine felt strongly about needing a seat and improved shelter facilities there as *"on a wet day the water comes flying in there and you get drenched"*[11]. Catherine regularly uses that bus stop to go to Cork and would like to see it improved.

4.2.4 Footpaths

[11] See Figure 11

Footpaths provoked a lot of discussion among all the co-researchers, the majority of it unfavourable. Ellen stated that *"the footpaths are treacherous"* while Denis observed that *"there's definitely room for improvement".* The WHO guidelines recommend that footpaths are well-maintained, free of obstructions, reserved for pedestrians, non-slip, wide enough for wheelchairs and have dropped curbs to road.

Figure 12: *"the narrowness and the posts and all the poles"* (Alice)

The narrowness of the footpaths was highlighted by five of the seven of the researchers, in particular on the main Bandon Bridge and McSwiney Quay[12]. Michael highlights the dangers associated with narrow footpaths on McSwiney Quay:

[12] See Figure 12

It means one often has to go out on the road [when walking]…and it's actually dangerous. For a pedestrian it's not a problem but for someone with a wheelchair or a buggy it's a problem.

This same safety issue is mentioned in relation to cars parking on the footpaths of McSwiney Quay and by the Millbrook on the Clonakilty Road. Michael notes that *"I have to walk out on the road which is a blooming busy road"* as a result.

Figure 13: *"well it hurts my feet, I mean it's all different levels"* (Alice)

Five of the co-researchers discussed the quality of the footpath paving. While Denis felt that the brick paving enhanced parts of the town such as Begley's Lane, Michael pointed out that the brick *"doesn't seem to survive....and it just makes walking very difficult"*. Alice discussed the poor quality curbing of footpaths:

well it hurts my feet, I mean it's all different levels...you're looking down all the time, you've got to be aware of the traffic as well but you've got to watch where you're going[13].

[13] See Figure 13

Alice's comment highlights the dangers associated with uneven footpaths and poor curbing when crossing the road. The co-researchers felt that poor footpaths combined with the busy traffic, as discussed in Section 4.2.6., can be quite dangerous.

Figure 14: *"the water pipes coming down...now that makes it deadly in the winter"* (Michael)

Four of the co-researchers discussed the dangers associated with water pipes pouring directly onto footpaths in the town[14]. Michael states:

> *the water pipes coming down, it seems to be standard practice to put them onto the footpath. Now that makes it deadly in the winter.*

Ellen agreed with Michael in relation to the danger associated with wet footpaths while Denis stated *"that seems unforgivable".* As a solution, Alice suggested *"make a gully underneath"*.

[14] See Figure 14

Figure 15: *"one of the lifelines in the town and it is used so much"* (Denis)

Two of the co-researchers highlighted the advantages of the footbridge[15] in Bandon town that connects McSwiney Quay to Mill Place. Catherine highlights that *"for pedestrians it's the main way of getting from one side of the river to the other"* while Denis describes it as *"one of the lifelines in the town and it is used so much"*. Both co-researchers state that they would use the footbridge almost every day and describe it as a *"great talking place"*.

4.2.5 Roads & Cycle Paths

The WHO guidelines recommend that pedestrian crossings are sufficient in number, are safe for people with different levels of mobility, have non-slip markings, visual and audio clues and have adequate crossing times. The guidelines state that cycle paths should be separate from pavements and other

[15] See Figure 15

pedestrian walkways however as there are no designated cycle paths in Bandon town, the co-researchers did not discuss cycle paths.

Figure 16: "*O that's treacherous, I won't even cross there*" (Ellen)

Over half of the co-researchers felt strongly about the danger they felt when using pedestrian crossings in parts of the town. In relation to the crossing at the start of the Kilbrittain Road[16], Michael states *"I've actually had to stop halfway a few times"* due to cars not stopping to allow him to cross. Ellen had the same experience there stating:

> *O that's treacherous, I won't even cross there...*I *won't walk into town because of it, no no.*

The lack of driver courtesy in allowing people cross at a designated pedestrian crossing has resulted in one researcher no longer walking into Bandon town.

[16] See Figure 16

Figure 17: *"you can take your life in your hands again even driving on that roundabout"* (Ellen)

The mini-roundabout[17] at this same crossing provoked a strong response from three of the co-researchers in relation to driver behaviour. Alice suggests that *"a lot of people don't know how to handle that mini-roundabout"* while Ellen states that *"you can take your life in your hands again even driving on that roundabout".* The co-researchers discussed how drivers are unsure how to apply driving rules to this roundabout and as a result, the co-researchers feel that it is unsafe both from a driver and a pedestrian perspective.

[17] See Figure 17

Figure 18: *"I see people struggling regularly there"* (Denis)

The lack of pedestrian crossings on busy roads like the Clonakilty Road, the Glasslinn Road and the Old Cork Road was criticised by the co-researchers. Five of the seven co-researchers felt that there was an urgent need for a pedestrian crossing at the junction of Glasslinn Road, Bandon Bridge and McSwiney Quay[18]. Denis states *"I see people struggling regularly there"* while Catherine highlights the benefit of a pedestrian crossing there:

> *and especially say if I get off the bus coming out from Cork, I'm trying to get across there and it would mean the difference, I would be able to get across the road in a safe manner.*

As a solution to both these issues, Alice suggested that *"there should be more light controlled crossings"* in the town, to which five of the other co-researchers agreed with Michael stating *"it would make a lot more sense because they are so much more visible".* Denis also suggested that *"it's certainly worth reminding drivers to give way to pedestrians with a sign or something like that".* Thus

[18] See Figure 18

the co-researchers felt that both more pedestrian crossings plus educating drivers on their duty to pedestrians would make Bandon more age-friendly.

4.2.6 Traffic

Figure 19: *"huge articulated lorries trundle by and that's very overwhelming"* (Ellen)

Over half of the co-researchers felt strongly about the heavy traffic going through the town in terms of the sense of danger it brings. Ellen stated that in the town *"huge articulated lorries trundle by and that's very overwhelming"*[19] while Alice agreed:

> *that huge truck trying to get around the tight corners...it's very frightening when you come up against something like that*[20].

[19] See Figure 19
[20] See Figure 20

Figure 20: *"it's very frightening when you come up against something like that"* (Alice)

Being overwhelmed by the trucks going through the town, especially when walking on narrow footpaths, was a feeling echoed by a number of the co-researchers.

The WHO guidelines state that drivers should give way to people at intersections and pedestrian crossings. The lack of driver courtesy to pedestrians was discussed by three of the co-researchers who felt that traffic does not give way to people on foot. Denis stated that *"I find drivers impertinent and rude...they don't give way to pedestrians generally in my experience"*. Catherine highlights dangerous driver behaviour at a pedestrian crossing as she was trying to cross:

> *When I was crossing there by St. Peter's church and this car came flying down and not alone did the car not stop, he looked straight ahead, he didn't look left, right or anything.*

While Michael found that traffic would stop to let him cross, 50% of the time Alice felt strongly that drivers were respectful to pedestrians crossing the road, stating *"I find people very courteous...[I]*

haven't found anybody who's refused or driven across us or anything like that". Alice and the other co-researchers did not know why they had such differing opinions however Alice did observe that:

> *I have noticed actually since I've become older that people actually are stopping, almost wanting to take me across the road.*

The co-researchers' experiences therefore suggest that pedestrian dangers related to heavy vehicle traffic and the lack of driver courtesy adversely affects their experiences of walking in Bandon town.

4.2.7 Safety

The co-researchers discussed safety in Bandon town from two perspectives, social safety in using certain areas of the town and physical safety in relation to footpaths and traffic. The WHO guidelines state that outdoor safety is promoted by good street lighting, police patrols and community education. Feeling intimidated in parts of the town was discussed by four of the co-researchers. In relation to the river walk near the weir, Margaret talks about feeling unsafe:

> *I used always walk my dog up there but then I got afraid, when there was a lot of people...drinking up there you know.*

While Catherine says *"I feel very much intimidated that I can't walk around my own home town".* Michael mentions *"feeling threatened without it actually translating into a threat"* and goes on to state:

> *there are places, little alleyways...I would be slow about going to them and I certainly wouldn't use them at night. I would say it's inviting unnecessary peril on myself.*

In relation to Michael's comment, Ellen suggests that *"as an older person...that would prevent you from going to something at the night-time, in the dark"* while Alice felt that *"I would think it would prevent anybody of any age going into Bandon".* Therefore the perception of safety and feeling safe were important to these co-researchers and their use of Bandon town.

Feeling unsafe due to traffic was discussed by all co-researchers. In Section 4.2.4 Michael mentions having to walk out onto the busy Clonakilty road due to, on-path parking by cars while in Section 4.2.5 Ellen will not use the pedestrian crossing by the Kilbrittain road due to drivers refusing to stop. In Section 4.2.6 Alice and Ellen discuss how it's intimidating and frightening coming up against lorries in the town.

4.2.8 Buildings

Figure 21: *"incredibly steep"* (Catherine)

All of the co-researchers discussed the steps going up to St. Peter's[21] and St. Patrick's Churches in Bandon. Ellen stated that the steps are *"incredibly steep"* while Catherine admitted that *"it's a bit hard on your legs".* In relation to St. Peter's Church, Alice suggested that seats could be placed on each of the plateaux in order to rest going up the steps. Tom then discussed the electric chairlift installed in the

[21] See Figure 21

Methodist Church and the indoor access ramp, all improving the accessibility of the building. Catherine talked about the ramped access to a number of public buildings in the town stating that *"it actually is making huge improvements"* to accessibility.

Figure 22: *"a lovely seating area"* (Ellen)

Four of the co-researchers discussed both good and poor access to shops in Bandon with Alice observing that:

> *some of the doors open in the middle...it's very difficult to get through and they are really difficult to maneuver.*

Catherine noted that the doors of some banks are *"heavy to push"*. Michael then highlighted that Brookes Pharmacy have *"an automatic opening door"* while Ellen adds that it also has *"a lovely*

seating area"[22]. The WHO guidelines recommend that buildings are well signposted outside and inside, with sufficient seating and toilets, accessible lifts, lamps, railings, stairs and non-slip floors. The co-researchers gave a general impression of being satisfied with the age-friendly facilities in the public buildings, with the few exceptions discussed above.

4.2.9 Services

Figure 23: "*it wouldn't matter where he was [located], he's at the end of a phone"* (Denis)

The WHO guidelines require that services are situated together and are accessible and that special customer service arrangements are provided such as separate queues or service counters for older people. The co-researchers felt that the shops and services in the town are generally located close together. Denis highlights the good service of a shop that delivers to customers stating *"it wouldn't matter where he was [located], he's at the end of a phone"*[23]. Alice appreciates protection from the elements in the local shopping centre *"there's no place like Riverview [shopping centre] where you can shop out of the weather".*

[22] See Figure 22
[23] See Figure 23

Figure 24: *"North Main Street, it is such a shame that street has been left to die"* (Michael)

However five of the seven co-researchers were concerned about the lack of vitality in certain areas of the town:

> *since they've built the Riverview shopping centre, everybody's inclined to shop up that end of town and as a result the other end of town is pretty bleak* (Catherine).

Alice agrees saying that *"there are a lot of empty shops, very dirty looking and seedy, very unkempt".* Michael goes onto say that:

> *North Main street*[24]*, it is such a shame that street has been left to die...a lot of buildings are derelict, the shops and businesses are closed and you'd nearly go through it in a hurry rather than dawdle.*

The co-researchers views on the empty and derelict buildings in Bandon suggest a sense of dismay about older parts of the town becoming unused and indicate that it is important to them that this

[24] See Figure 24

situation is reversed. Denis suggests that *"empty shops can be made look attractive while they are empty..and then it becomes slightly less shabby in this area and slightly more attractive to walk through".*

4.2.10 Public Toilets and Car parks

Figure 25: *"good, accessible, well-kept public toilets"* (Denis)

The WHO guidelines recommend that public toilets outdoors and indoors are sufficient in number, clean, well-maintained and accessible. The co-researchers noted that there are only two public toilets in the town however other toilets exist in private shopping centres for public use. While over half the co-researchers would not use public toilets in the town as *"you'd use cafes and restaurants"* (Michael), they all believed that public toilets are important for visitors to the town. Denis stated

I always think that it's a mark of a welcoming town to have good, accessible, well-kept public toilets, well signposted because it's not so important for residents but it says a lot to the world[25].

Alice however pointed out *"there's no signposts in Bandon pointing to the public toilets".*

Figure 26: "*that could be a first class car park if they surfaced it and marked in parking spots"* (Tom)

The co-researchers felt that car parks should be part of an age-friendly town and selected to add them to the area's to photograph. The co-researchers felt that there were a sufficient number of car parks in the town however of varying quality. Tom highlights that:

The car park opposite Kelleher's[26] *is in a desperate state...that could be a first class car park if they surfaced it and marked in parking spots*

Four of the co-researchers use that car park regularly and felt that improvements could be made.

[25] See Figure 25
[26] See Figure 26

4.2.11 "Not just a passing little whiff of smoke"

All of the co-researchers felt strongly about wanting to make Bandon town more age-friendly and expressed a desire to see action being taken on these issues. Michael summarised their hopes for bringing about change by stating:

> *I think maybe by what we are doing and highlighting it and pushing it and letting the local council know that what we are doing is serious and not just a passing little whiff of smoke.*

The co-researchers also highlighted the all-inclusive nature of an age-friendly town. Alice noted that *"if you get it right for older people, you get it right for all people"* while Denis stated:

age-friendly to me doesn't mean older people but it certainly includes older people in a way that designs and plans don't always think of and I think it's an obligation to build something that's truly age-friendly because that's what people are, they are at their age.

The co-researchers thus suggested that they are interested in making Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings universally friendly for all people who live, work, visit and experience Bandon town

4.3 DISCUSSION

Taking the first two research questions together will utilise the co-researchers views and experiences of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings to highlight the areas of improvement required to make the town more age-friendly. The co-researchers took many photographs of and praised the beauty of the river running through Bandon and the positive aspect it provides to the town. They spoke of the nice walkways, the outdoor seating and the views that it provides to their use of the town. Gilroy (2008) highlights that access to green space and natural habitats is known to impact on sense of wellbeing along with promoting physical activity and provide opportunities for interaction. The co-researchers discussed their use of the riverwalks for both pleasure and in order to access the town centre. However safety on certain aspects of the riverwalk was suggested by the co-researchers as an issue to be addressed.

The hazards of vehicle traffic in the town was discussed by the co-researchers. Feeling overwhelmed by heavy lorries, especially while on narrow footpaths was discussed while cars parked on footpaths resulted in one co-researcher having to regularly walk out on busy roads. The lack of driver courtesy both at pedestrian crossings and at street junctions was highlighted by three co-researchers however, one co-researcher believed that drivers in Bandon were courteous. The lack of pedestrian crossings on busy roads was suggested as an area requiring improvement in the town. Good, safe conditions for walking are an essential element of age-friendly communities while the design of traffic facilities can provide an appropriate balance of mobility and safety for all road users (Ageing Well Network, 2011). The Bandon Local Area Plan (hereafter BLAP) (Cork County Council, 2011) states that a detailed traffic and transportation study is required for Bandon to consider alternative options for future traffic management within the town. The co-researchers of this study suggest that addressing traffic volume and the driver/pedestrian relationship would increase pedestrian safety in the town.

The narrowness and quality of footpaths was acknowledged by the co-researchers as an area needing improvement in the town. The co-researchers suggested that uneven footpath paving and poor curbing makes walking difficult. Borst *et al.,* (2008) state that footpaths, or well-maintained walking surfaces, contribute to the amount of self-reported walking behaviour. The BLAP recognises the necessity for improved footpaths and increased pedestrian crossings in Bandon town (Cork County Council, 2011). It also sets out proposals for footpath widening and improved paving and kerbs. The co-researchers of this study suggest creating age-friendly footpaths is necessary for safe and pleasurable walking.

Feeling unsafe in certain areas of Bandon was expressed by the co-researchers. As a result of this, two co-researchers no longer use part of the river walk while one co-researcher stated that feeling threatened would prevent you from going somewhere at night time. Gilroy (2008) notes that the fear of crime acts as a powerful constraint on freedom of movement, with people withdrawing into self-imposed curfews. The co-researchers also suggested that the physical dangers of heavy traffic, driver discourtesy and narrow, uneven pavements add to a lack of safety in Bandon. If designed according to age friendly principles, the built environment can contribute greatly to the actual and perceived safety of communities (Ageing Well Network 2011). The WHO guidelines recommend good lighting, well-kept, clean streets, a guard presence and community and personal safety initiatives to feel safe in a community.

In considering the final research question, are Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings age-friendly, the co-researchers believed that the positive aspects of the river setting, the outdoor seating and the location of services in the town are age-friendlly. However the co-researchers suggested that other aspects of Bandon's physical environment need improvement in order to become age-friendly. They highlighted the negative effects that traffic, footpaths and feeling unsafe can have on their use of the town. The co-researchers however felt strongly about the positive impact of improving Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings. They highlighted the benefits of an age-friendly town for all residents and users of the town and not just older people.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings against WHO (2007) age-friendly guidelines. The research was completed by local community members taking photographs and interpreting the photographs in a focus group setting. From this data, the co-researchers suggested areas of improvement required to Bandon's physical environment. While the co-researchers did not give a definitive answer on whether the town's outdoor spaces and buildings are age-friendly, they did provide opinions on the age-friendly supports and challenges in the town and highlighted how these affect their use of the town on a daily basis. The co-researchers also provided suggestions to tackle the age-friendly challenges, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

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CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws together the key research findings from Chapter Four and presents them in the form of recommendations for age-friendly improvements to Bandon. Recommendations for the presentation of the research results to local and national agencies, and policy makers are also detailed. This chapter then reflects on the research process and highlights a number of learning's for future research and social work practice.

5.2 RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to evaluate the age-friendliness of Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings. In doing so, the co-researchers findings suggested that while some aspects of Bandon's physical environment are age-friendly, other aspects require some improvements in order to be considered age-friendly. The areas of improvement suggested by the co-researchers are presented in the table below. The co-researchers believed that these improvements would provide universal benefit to all community members and not just older people. They suggested that an age-friendly town supports the well-being of all ages from birth onwards.

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5.2.1 Recommended Age-Friendly improvements to Bandon town

Domain	No.	Issue for Improvement	Affected area of Bandon	Suggestion for Improvement
Environment	1	Littering	River walk by Lidl	More bins
	2	Dog fouling	Throughout Bandon	Fenced dog walking areas & positive education
	3	Access to Town Park	Town Park	Bus service to Town Park
	4	Exploit tourist potential of town	River, Weir & Historical areas	Promote river & historical aspects of town
Footpaths	5	Narrow footpaths	McSwiney Quay & Bandon Bridge	Widen footpaths
	6	Poor quality paving & curbing	Throughout Bandon	Improve quality of paving & curbing
	7	Water pipes pouring onto footpaths	Throughout Bandon	Add gullys underneath water pipes
	8	On-path car parking	McSwiney Quay & Clonakilty Rd	
Traffic	9	Lack of pedestrian crossings on busy roads & junctions	Clonakilty Rd, Glasslinn Road, Old Cork Rd	More light controlled pedestrian crossings
	10	Lack of driver courtesy	Pedestrian crossings & junctions	More light controlled pedestrian crossings
	11	Heavy truck traffic	Throughout Bandon	
Safety	12	Feeling unsafe in parts of town	River walk	
	13	Dangers associated with traffic	Pedestrian crossings	
Buildings	14	Heavy & difficult to open doors	Shops & banks	Automatic opening doors
	15	Steep church steps	St. Peter's & St. Patrick's Churches	Seats on plateaux of St. Peter's church
	16	Derelict buildings and empty shops	North Main Street & other areas	Clean up derelict/empty buildings
Services	17	Improve bus stop to Cork	Glasslinn Rd	Seat & improved shelter
	18	Signpost public toilets	Throughout Bandon	Signposts
	19	Improve car parks	Throughout Bandon	Improve surface & bay markings

5.2.2 Recommended presentation of research results

The aim of this research was to improve Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings thereby improving the quality of life of Bandon's local people. The key element of this study was the use of local knowledge to produce local suggestions and solutions to creating age-friendly environments. The results of this knowledge should be submitted, presented and used to advocate with local government leaders, local business leaders, local decision makers and local agencies to build a community with age-friendly features as defined by local older people. Therefore this study recommends the following presentation of the research results:

- Submission of results to Cork County Council in order to promote the use of age-friendly planning principles, universal design features and consultation with older people's forums for the execution of any *Bandon Local Area Plan* proposals or other upgrades to the town's physical environment. This submission would also advocate for upgrades to the physical environment as suggested by this research.

- Submission of results to the *Age-Friendly County Programme* regional development manager for Cork County in order to provide relevant information regarding age-friendly outdoor spaces and buildings in Bandon. This submission could also advocate for the commencement of the initiative in Cork County.

- Presentation of results to the Bandon Town Council, Chamber of Commerce, Bandon Business Group, Bandon Action Group and Business Association in an effort to promote support and action on the recommendations of the research results. In particular, these groups may assist with the image improvements required to the neglected areas of the town.

- Submission of results to local Garda Division and local traffic wardens to advocate for driver compliance with traffic rules and regulations and to promote safety initiatives in the town.

- Submission of results to local litter warden to ensure compliance with litter and dog fouling rules and regulations and to promote possible public education initiatives in conjunction with the local town council in relation to dog fouling.

- Submission to Road Safety Authority, National Roads Authority and local authorities to promote the introduction of effective measures to improve the safety of pedestrians in local towns and to promote the possibility of the introduction of Shared Space or Living Streets initiatives in local towns.

- This study also recommends the creation of an age-friendly forum of local community members in Bandon town. This forum would undertake and promote action towards creating an age-friendly town. The forum would be available to consult with relevant agencies making changes to the town as suggested in this study and participate in further age-friendly research on the town.

5.2.3 Dissemination of research results

The results of this study will be presented to the co-researcher group in May 2012 to discuss the research outcomes and invite their feedback on same. The co-researchers photographs and the research outcomes will be presented in Bandon on 25th May 2012 to local community members including local social groups, the town mayor, Cork County Council representatives and local town councillors. This presentation is part of the *Bealtaine Festival 2012* (Age & Opportunity, 2012) and will be co-hosted by the Network and the co-researchers of this study. The Bealtaine Festival is an annual festival that showcases the talents and creativity of older people throughout the month of May. It is supported by the organisation Age & Opportunity and events run throughout Ireland that celebrate creativity in older age. The research study has already been publicised in West Cork newspaper, *The Southern Star* and in the West Cork monthly magazine, *The Opinion.*

5.3 RESEARCH LEARNINGS

This was a community based research study with a participatory approach. The Network of Social Groups identified their research aim and collaborated with University College Cork Community and Academic Research Links to complete the research. The understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the researchers and co-researchers evolved over the research period and the knowledge from this process produced a number of learning's for future research and for social work practice.

5.3.1 Full and equal collaboration

The participatory element of this study was an evolving process whereby the Network researcher, the co-researchers and I developed a greater understanding of participatory expectations as the study

progressed. From the beginning of this collaboration the Network researcher and I shared research tasks, discussing and agreeing next steps at all times. The co-researchers provided both the photographic data and the focus group analysis required to evaluate the age-friendliness of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings. Therefore the knowledge for this research came from and was created by the local co-researchers. The research process was educational for all those involved. The co-researcher and I learned to facilitate the research in partnership with each other while the co-researchers become more confident and more convinced of the changes they could achieve in their community as the study progressed.

The use of photographs worked very well in capturing the physical environment of Bandon. It allowed the co-researchers to pick and present their individual experiences of Bandon town. The photographs also facilitated continuous and lively discussion in the focus groups due to the visual prompts. However for future research this study recommends that each co-researcher select a limited number of photographs, such as three, that are the most important to them. This is to ensure that these photographs are discussed in the focus groups. In this study, the Network researcher and I selected the photographs to be discussed thereby limiting an element of the participatory nature of the study.

This study did not include provision for the input of the co-researchers in the creation of this research report. While a meeting was organised to present the report to the co-researchers and invite their feedback, this study would recommend the inclusion of an additional focus group, after the research data and analysis has been collated. This focus group would allow the co-researchers to select the data to be presented in the research report.

The commitment required from the co-researchers of this study was short-term. Once the Bealtaine Festival presentation was completed, input from the group was not required. However in retrospect, the Network should look to creating an age-friendly forum with a long term commitment towards creating an age-friendly Bandon. This forum would continue to use its skills and abilities to assess and provide practical solutions for an age-friendly town. This forum could also consult with relevant agencies to bring about the changes required to create an age-friendly town. In short, this forum would be committed to local action to create long term age-friendly change in Bandon.

5.3.2 Implications for Social Work Practice

This community based research study utilized the skills, abilities, knowledge and experiences of the local community to evaluate an aspect of their local town's age-friendliness, with a long term aim of creating an age-friendly community. Community social work practice utilizes concepts of self-help and voluntary activity to address problems facing individuals and groups (Lynch and Forde, 2006). Key community work skills relevant to this study were valuing local knowledge and skills, confidence-building and linking the community's actions to future social change. Local knowledge and skills produced the research data, analysis and recommendations. Important during the research process was highlighting the importance of local knowledge to create relevant and sustainable change in the town. Strand *et al.,* (2003) state this local knowledge creates richer, more valid data with which to engage policy makers. Building confidence in the skills of the co-researchers was important in this study as was linking their work to future change in Bandon. While some co-researchers initially wondered what difference could be made given the current lack of funding in Ireland, towards the end of the process, when the photographs were displayed, more hope was apparent in the changes that could come about.

5.4 REFLECTIVE PIECE

Reflecting on the research path travelled during this study, I can see the journey of understanding made. From the initial three-way meeting with the Network, when I believed that I would be given a research task to complete alone, through to the completion of this research report with the Network researcher, I can see that my research role was very different to that which I expected. During the research process, my role was as a facilitator, something I did not fully understand until well into the process. This involved meeting with the Network researcher to organize research tasks and meeting with the co-researchers to complete those tasks. At times, I wondered about the necessity of my role as the co-researchers were doing all the work. However now I can see that we were working as a team where each team role is important and interdependent on each other. Building confidence and trust in the knowledge of the community was a learning process for me, as well as for the co-researchers. Being used to producing academic essays alone, a new way of working was required to complete a community based research study. However once I had earned the trust of the co-researchers and placed my trust in them, the research seemed to progress with little worry at all. Seeing the photographs together for the first time in the focus groups really brought home the power of the information that the co-researchers had created. It was at this stage that I began to really understand the influence that the study could have on making real change to Bandon town. Seeing these photographs and hearing the co-researchers talk about the effect the physical environment had on their lives made me feel both proud to

be a part of this study and hopeful that change can be brought about. Seeing the results has ignited a desire for social change in Bandon which I hope the co-researchers share.

Finally, I remember thinking at the start of this study *"I'm not an engineer so how will I assess outdoor spaces and buildings?"* Now I can see that I did not assess outdoor spaces and buildings, Bandon locals did, and we did not need engineers to do that, we just needed real people and their stories to complete that task.

5.5 CONCLUSION

"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody" (Jacobs, 1961 cited in Menec *et al.,* 2011). Implicit in the notion of age-friendly communities is that older adults are an integral part of assessing, planning and implementing the changes required. This research sought to evaluate the changes required to Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings to become more age-friendly. This evaluation produced a number of recommendations to create a more age-friendly town. These recommendations were the result of the work of local people with local knowledge and so produced outcomes that can be used by the community. Your home is your kingdom; this research study aims to create an age-friendly kingdom in Bandon where people of all ages and abilities can age well.

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APPENDIX 1

Bandon's Age-Friendly Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Journal Guide

The World Health Organisation's Age-friendly Cities Guide is a framework for assessing the age-friendliness of cities and towns.

An age-friendly town encourages active ageing by adapting its structures and services to be accessible to older people with different needs and capacities.

Active ageing allows people to reach their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout life and to participate in society.

Active ageing is a life-long process so an age-friendly town is not just "older-friendly". Barrier-free buildings and streets enhance the mobility and independence of all people, young and old; secure streets allow children and older people to venture outside in confidence to participate in active leisure and in social activities; the local economy profits from older adult consumers.

Age-Friendly Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Journal Guide

You have selected to assess Bandon's Outdoor Spaces and Buildings for age-friendliness. A town's landscape, buildings, roads, footpaths and services contribute to confident mobility, healthy behaviour and social participation while the accessibility of buildings and spaces reflect respect and social inclusion of Bandon's population. For the checklist to be effective, older people must be involved as full partners.

GUIDELINES FOR USE

1. Using the list of questions on pages 3-5, we would like you to take photographs showing the positive or negative features of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings. You can take up to 30 photographs maximum (funding limit).
2. You can take photographs of all or some of the areas however we would like each person pick 2 specific areas so that all areas are covered.
3. We would like you to comment on why you took the photograph, what it means to you and how it matches your experience of Bandon's positive or negative features.
4. We will discuss these photographs and your comments together in a focus group to highlight strengths and weaknesses of Bandon and its priority areas of need.
5. The overall aim of the project is to understand the changes that need to happen in Bandon to make its outdoor spaces and buildings age-friendly.
6. Boundaries of Bandon Town - please see attached map
7. Any queries please contact: Researcher - 087 xxxxxx / Network Researcher - 087 xxxxxx

Project Timetable	
Monday 30th January AM	Introduction of project at Network of Social Groups meeting & request for volunteers.
Monday 30th January PM	Initial meeting of volunteers to discuss project, guidelines and checklist. Agree type of camera needed (digital or disposable).
Monday 30th January to Thursday 16th February	Photograph taking and comments.
Thursday 16th February	Submit photographs to Researcher/Network Researcher to group together for Focus Group discussion.
Tuesday 28th February	Focus Groups to discuss photographs and comments
March/April 2012	Completion of research report by Researcher/Network Researcher
May 2012	Presentation at Bealtaine Festival

Age-Friendly Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Journal Guide

NAME	
ADDRESS	
AGE GROUP (please tick)	**55-64** ☐ **65-74** ☐ **75+** ☐

No.	Question	Yes	No	Photo Taken	Photo No. or Date
	A. Environment				
1	Bandon is clean				
2	Bandon has enforced regulations limiting: 1. Noise levels 2. Unpleasant smells				
	B. Green Spaces & Walkways				
4	Bandon has well-maintained & safe green spaces				
5	Bandon has pedestrianised areas that are: 1. Free from obstructions 2. Smooth surfaces 3. Easily accessed 4. Public toilets				
	C. Outdoor Seating				
6	Outdoor seating is available in: 1. Parks 2. Transport stops 3. Public spaces				

No.	Question	Yes	No	Photo Taken	Photo No. or Date
7	Outdoor seating is: 1. Spaced at regular intervals 2. Well-maintained 3. Patrolled to ensure safe access				
D. Footpaths					
8	Footpaths are: 1. Well-maintained 2. Smooth 3. Level 4. Non-slip 5. Wide enough to accommodate walking assistance 6. Clear of any obstructions				
9	Footpaths have low curbs that taper off to the road at junctions				
10	Pedestrians have priority of use of footpaths (e.g. cars not parked on footpaths etc)				
E. Roads					
11	Pedestrian crossings are: 1. Non-slip 2. Appropriately placed 3. Make it safe to cross the road 4. Adequate numbers of				
12	Pedestrian crossing lights: 1. Allow sufficient time for people to cross the road 2. Have visual and audio signals				
13	Roads are: 1. Well-designed 2. Have appropriately placed structures (traffic islands, over/under passes) to allow pedestrians to cross busy roads				

No.	Question	Yes	No	Photo Taken	Photo No. or Date
	F. Traffic				
14	There is strict enforcement of traffic rules and regulations with drivers giving way to pedestrians				
	G. Cycle Paths				
15	There are separate cycle paths for cyclists				
	H. Buildings				
16	Buildings are accessible and have: 1. Lifts 2. Outdoor and Indoor access ramps 3. Adequate signage (e.g toilets, seating etc) 4. Railings on stairs 5. Steps/Stairs that are not too high or steep 6. Non-slip flooring 7. Rest areas with comfortable chairs 8. Sufficient numbers of public toilets				
	I. Public Toilets				
17	Public toilets are: 1. Clean 2. Well-maintained 3. Easily accessible for people with varying abilities 4. Well-signposted 5. Placed in convenient locations 6. Sufficient numbers of				
	J. Safety				
18	Public safety in all open spaces and buildings is a priority & is promoted by: 1. Measures to reduce risk from natural disasters 2. Good street lighting 3. Garda patrols 4. Enforcement of Bye-laws (e.g control of parking, litter and animal control etc) 5. Support for community & personal safety initiatives				
	K. Services (Banks, Post Office, Cafes, Shops etc.)				

No.	Question	Yes	No	Photo Taken	Photo No. or Date
19	Services are: 1. Located together 2. Located in close proximity to where older people live 3. Can be easily accessed				
20	There are special age-friendly customer service arrangements such as seating in queues, delivery of groceries - Please give other examples				
20	Other Observations				

Age-Friendly Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Journal Guide

COMMENTS

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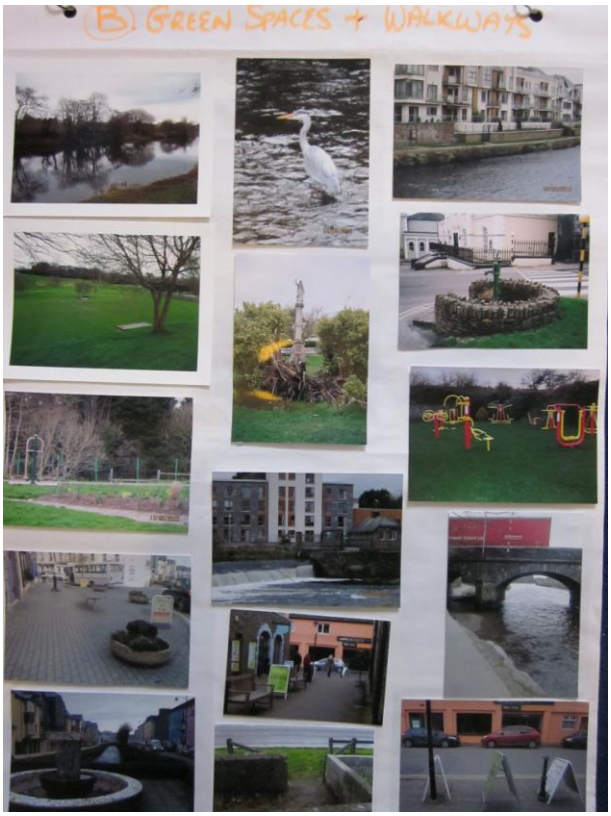
APPENDIX 2

FOCUS GROUP FLIP CHART SHEETS

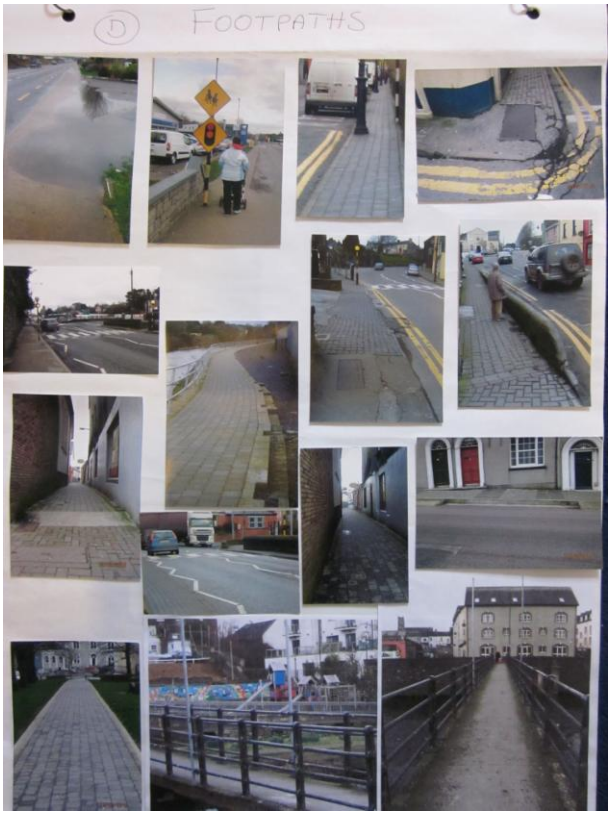
1. Environment

2. Green Spaces and Walkways

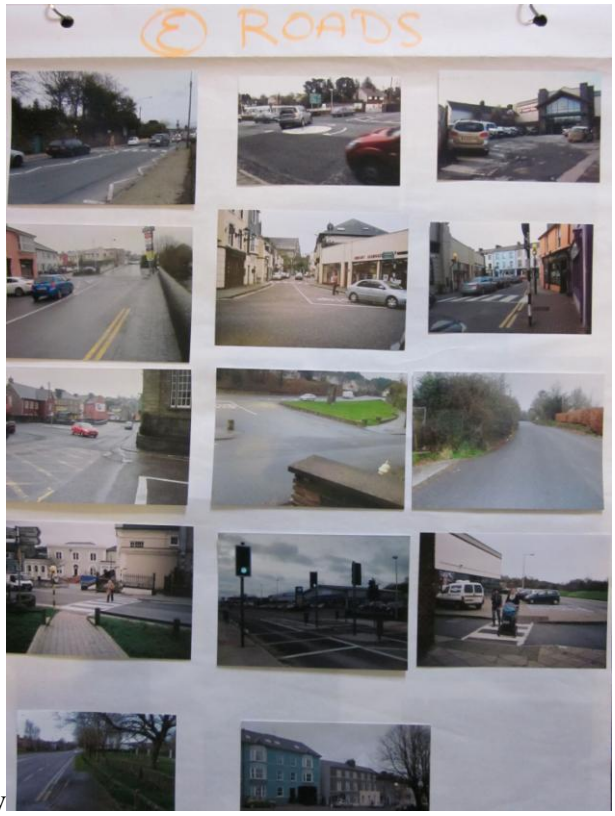


3. Outdoor Seating

4. Footpaths



5. Roads



6. Traffic & Safety

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7. Buildings

8. Public Toilets

9. Carparks

APPENDIX 3

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

A. Scene setting and ground rules - 5 mins

- *Personal introduction*

- *Welcome:*

1. Thank you for taking these photographs, we have a wonderful selection of the good and the bad of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings.
2. Today is about coming together to discuss these photographs in the form of a focus group or discussion group.
3. A focus group is where a number of people come together to discuss a particular topic, in our case, to discuss your photographs of Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings.
4. The purpose of a group discussion is so that you can present your own views and experiences and also hear other peoples views and opinions.
5. In particular, I am interested in hearing about why you took a particular photograph, why it was significant for you, how it impacts your day to day life in Bandon.
6. The purpose of this is to put meaning into the photographs you have taken so that other people who have limited knowledge of Bandon, can understand why these photographs are important.
7. It also gives you a chance to discuss if you believe that Bandon is age-friendly, based on these photographs.

- *Purpose of project:*

1. What are your views on Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings
2. What do you think are priority areas of need in relation to Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings
3. Do you believe that Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings are age friendly

- *Ground Rules:*

1. All signed a consent form which explains that today's focus group will be tape-recorded. This is to capture everything that is said, the way it is said.
2. Some of this recorded information may be published in the research project in the form of disguised extracts meaning that all comments will be kept anonymous.
3. This tape-recording will be deleted once the research project is corrected which will be in June 2012.
4. Everything said here today should be kept confidential between the group.
5. The consent form also explains that you can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the focus group, in which case the material will be deleted.

• *Format of today:*

1. Format of today - we will start with brief introductions, then discuss the photographs by section and end with a final question on naming this research group.
2. Form of a discussion, do not need to wait to be invited to speak
3. No right or wrong answers, everyones views are of interest & the aim is to hear as many different thoughts as possible
4. Likely be different views or experiences, people should feel free to say what they think & to agree or disagree with other peoples views

• *Any questions?*

B. Individual introductions - 15 mins

• *Brief introductions to allow people to talk & listen*

C. Discussion - 60 mins

1. What was it like to take these photographs?

- *What was the experience like*

- How did you feel going around Bandon taking photos

2. How did you choose what to photograph?

- What made you pick a particular scene

- Why did you pick this area to photograph

3. What are your views on Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings

4. What do you think are the priority areas of need?

5. What do you think are the changes required?

6. Are Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings are age friendly?

F. Final Topic & End - 10 mins

• Mention Final Topic in order to allow group to prepare to finish

8. As a group, what would you like to be called in this project?

- Would you like to be referred to as older people, a social group, a research group, a volunteer group, a network group

• *Ending comments:*

1. Anything else to say before we finish, Anything we've left out
2. Anything you feel you haven't had a chance to say?
3. Thank you - this discussion was extremely helpful in putting meaning to the photographs

• *Next steps:*

1. I will write up what you have said, organise it into the areas we have discussed and write up my thesis.
2. This is to be completed by mid-April and a copy will be available to you by mid-June
3. Also we need to organise the photographs for the Bealtaine Festival which will be held on May 25th.
4. If you would like to be involved in the organisation and presentation of the photographs for this, let us know today.
5. Finally, as said at the beginning, all information recorded today will be kept confidential and will be anonymous if quoted in the thesis. Likewise the owners of the photographs will be kept confidential.
6. And a final thanks to the Credit Union for funding the development of the photographs and to Brookes Chemist for the discount on the development of photographs

APPENDIX 4

CONSENT FORM

I……agree to participate in the Network of Social Group's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for the focus group to be audio-recorded

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the focus group, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from the focus group may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

Signed……. Date…….

Information Sheet accompanying Consent Form

Purpose of the Study. As part of the requirements for the Master of Social Work at UCC, I must carry

out a research study. The UCC Community and Research Links is a service provided to Civil Society Organisations to carry out research with or on behalf of the organisation. The Network of Social Groups, Bandon and surrounding areas, has requested the UCC Community and Research Links to carry out research into the age-friendliness of Bandon town's outdoor spaces and buildings. The study is concerned with older people's opinions on whether Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings are age-friendly in accordance with World Health Organisation guidelines.

What will the study involve? The study will involve a volunteer research group taking photographs of Bandon town that reflect their experience of the positive and negative features of the town's outdoor spaces and buildings. The group will then meet in a focus group to discuss their photographs and their positive and negative experiences of Bandon. This work will take place over a 4-6 week period. The data collected from the photographs and the focus group will then form part of my research thesis, to be completed by 18th April 2012.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked to take part in this study because you are an older person with knowledge and experience of Bandon town. The World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines require older people to be full and active partners when researching the age-friendliness of a town. WHO uses the United Nations standard of age 60 to describe "older" people while we are using an age of 55.

Do you have to take part? Participation in this study is voluntary therefore you do not have to take part. If you do agree to take part, you have the option of withdrawing before this research commences or discontinuing after the photography has commenced. You also have the option of withdrawing up to two weeks after the focus group has been conducted. If you choose to withdraw, you have the option of having your data (photographs & comments) destroyed if you so wish. You will receive a copy of this information sheet and the consent form detailing these participation options.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes. I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous. Any exhibitions of photographs will be kept entirely anonymous if required.

What will happen to the information which you give? The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, the data will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal. Providing it reaches the requisite

academic and presentation standards, the research report will be placed, with the approval of the course tutor on the UCC Community and Research Links website: http://scienceshop.ucc.ie.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. The study will involve you taking photographs of Bandon's outdoor spaces and buildings and discussing these photographs in a group setting. You can choose give as much of your views and opinions as you would like. However it may happen that talking about your positive and negative experiences of Bandon may cause you some distress.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the photography period and at the end of the focus group, I will discuss with you as a group how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, you should contact me on 087 xxxxxxx or the Network researcher on 087 xxxxxx

Who has reviewed this study? The Department of Applied Social Studies UCC, and the Network of Social Groups have reviewed and approved this study to take place.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me on 087 xxxxxx or xxxx@gmail.com

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form attached