

Engage with Age

Strategic Plan 2026-2029



Empowering older people to live happy, healthy, independent and more connected lives

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INTRODUCTION

Northern Ireland continues to experience significant demographic change, with the number of people aged 65 and over steadily increasing. As our population ages, it is more important than ever that older people are supported to remain active, connected, and valued within their communities. Engage with Age has long been committed to empowering older people to live happy, healthy, independent and connected lives.

Our previous Strategic Plan (2023–2026) built upon more than two decades of experience working alongside older people across Belfast. Through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, trustees and partners, we have continued to develop and deliver programmes that reduce loneliness and isolation, support health and wellbeing, strengthen local older people's groups and ensure that the voices of older people are heard.

The development of this new Strategic Plan for 2026–2029 has provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made and the challenges that remain. During this process we engaged with trustees, staff, volunteers, older people and key stakeholders to review our priorities and ensure that our work continues to respond to the changing needs of older people and the communities in which they live.

Following this review, the Board confirmed that our mission, vision and values remain strongly aligned with the organisation's purpose and continue to guide all aspects of our work. These values being older people-led, empowering, respectful, collaborative and ensuring that our work is enjoyable remain central to how we support older people and develop our services.

Over the next three years, Engage with Age will continue to focus on four key strategic aims: reducing loneliness and isolation, improving health and wellbeing, strengthening older people's groups and forums, and ensuring that older people can influence decisions that affect their lives. Alongside these aims, we will continue to strengthen our organisation so that we have the capacity, partnerships and resources required to deliver meaningful impact for older people.

This strategy sets out our commitment to building stronger communities where older people feel respected, included and listened to. We recognise the invaluable contribution older people make to society, and we will continue to work with partners and communities to ensure that their voices, experiences and aspirations help shape the future.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan, including our Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, participants and partner organisations. Your insight, dedication and commitment have helped shape the direction of Engage with Age for the years ahead.

Together, we look forward to continuing our work to empower older people and to create communities where older people are valued, connected and able to lead fulfilling lives.

Marianne Skelcher
Chairperson, Engage with Age



A significant body of work was undertaken during the development of the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan to review and refresh Engage with Age’s mission, vision and values. This work involved trustees, staff, older people and key stakeholders and resulted in a strong and values-led framework that clearly articulated the core purpose and direction of the organisation.

As part of the development of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees formally reviewed the mission, vision and values. Trustees agreed that they continue to accurately reflect the core business, ethos and strategic intent of Engage with Age and remain highly relevant to the needs of older people and the organisation’s operating context.

The Board therefore approved the decision to retain the mission, vision and values unchanged for the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION

To empower older people to live happy, healthy, independent, and connected lives.

VISION

All older people are respected, valued, included and listened to in society, and actively involved in shaping the world.

VALUES

Older people-led - Our work will be driven by the needs, rights and ambitions of older people, including those who are marginalised/under-represented, with older people taking the lead in our work.

Empowerment- Our work will support the rights of older people to shape decisions, to work to build stronger communities, to contribute to society, to have their voices listened to, and to advocate for their needs.

Respect- We believe that every person is of equal value within society and has a right to be treated with dignity and respect. We will live out this value in our work including making any reasonable adjustments needed.

Partnership- We will expand the reach and impact of our activities by working closely with other organisations, groups and partners in the best interests of older people.

Fun- Everyone has the right to take part in stimulating activities and have fun.

As part of the development of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees undertook a review of Engage with Age’s Strategic Aims. Trustees agreed that the four Strategic Aims and the Supporting Strategic Aim remain strongly aligned with the organisation’s purpose, values and core areas of work.

The Board confirmed that the Strategic Aims continue to accurately reflect Engage with Age’s focus on reducing loneliness and isolation, improving health and wellbeing, strengthening older people’s groups and forums, and ensuring the voice of older people is heard and acted upon.

Trustees therefore approved the decision to retain the Strategic Aims and Supporting Strategic Aim unchanged for the 2026–2029 period, with refreshed priorities and actions developed to reflect emerging needs, learning and the changing external environment.

STRATEGIC AIMS FOR 2026-29

1. To empower older people to reduce the impact of loneliness and isolation on peer individuals within their communities and neighbourhoods.
2. To empower older people to improve their own health and wellbeing.
3. To strengthen communities and neighbourhoods by supporting and empowering older people’s groups and forums.
4. To empower older people so they can shape matters that affect their lives.

SUPPORTING AIMS

To develop Engage with Age as an organisation which is capable of delivering its strategic aims for 2026-29.



STRATEGIC AIM 1

To empower older people to reduce the impact of isolation and loneliness on peer individuals within their communities and neighbourhoods.

OUTCOME

Older people create increased social connections and reduce loneliness within their neighbourhoods.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026-29

- Improve and increase ways of identifying lonely and/ or isolated older people including the most isolated older people.
- Empower volunteer older people to lead and run activity groups and deliver befriending support to reduce loneliness and isolation amongst their peers.
- Engage isolated older people to take part in activity groups and befriending.
- Develop and increase the services for lonely and/ or isolated older people.
- Increase engagement with under-represented groups and marginalised communities.
- Collaborate with partners and agencies to increase the impact of our work to reduce loneliness and/ or isolation.



STRATEGIC AIM 2

To empower older people to improve their own health and wellbeing.

OUTCOME

Older people have improved health and wellbeing.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026-29

- Deliver a portfolio of activities that promotes older peoples improved physical and mental health, better skills and knowledge, and enhanced wellbeing.
- Review and expand our programmes introducing new services.
- Work in partnership with others to deliver and signpost to support that counteracts the rising cost of living.
- Review and expand our informational and promotional services.



STRATEGIC AIM 3

To strengthen communities and neighbourhoods by supporting and empowering older people's groups and forums.

OUTCOME

Groups and forums are sustainable, strong, and actively engaged with their communities and neighbourhoods.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026-29

- Increase the sustainability and effectiveness of older people's groups and forums consolidating the learning and developments
- Establish more older people's groups, as well as signposting older people into existing groups.
- Target support to groups that need support most.
- Support the development and strengthening of networks of older people's groups and forums.
- Enable the development of relationships between older people's groups and stakeholders such as public agencies and organisations that take decisions that affect older people.



STRATEGIC AIM 4

To empower older people so they can shape matters that affect their lives.

OUTCOME

Older people feel they have been listened to and have shaped decisions that affect them.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026-29

- Work in partnership with other organisations to lobby on key issues that affect older people.
- Agree key issues that affect older people and empower older people to lobby for attention to address them.
- Deliver a programme of engagement between older people and influencers and decision makers.
- Consolidate Engage with Age's communications to improve awareness of the role and needs of older people.
- Produce and utilize research on the lived experience of older people.



SUPPORTING AIM

To develop Engage with Age so it is capable of delivering its strategic aims 2026-29.

SUPPORTING VALUE

We will work efficiently and with integrity

- Our work will be evidence-based, ensuring that our resources are used carefully, to ensure value for money, empowering those who need support the most.
- We will always try to do the right thing and strive to deliver the best work we can, operating with transparency and to high standards. We will do what we say we will do and be open and responsive to feedback.

OUTCOME

Engage with Age consolidates its work and has capacity to extend its reach to empower older people to live happy, healthy, independent, and connected lives.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026-29

PEOPLE

- Support all staff to have a healthy work life that enables them to achieve the desired outcomes of Engage with Age and their own aspirations.
- Achieve a collaborative team working culture to ensure synergies across the organisation are not missed.
- Manage the growth of our services with appropriate human resources.
- Increase the number of volunteers, and support and empower them.



FINANCIAL RESOURCES, PHYSICAL RESOURCES, AND ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

- Develop a more diverse and dependable income base.
- Maintain appropriate physical and digital resources.
- Increase our capacity to support the ongoing development of our services and provision.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS

- Review our activities; perhaps stopping some things and starting others, leaving some activities to others, all leading to better support for older people.

COMMUNICATIONS AND FUNDRAISING

- Review communications and fundraising priorities and put in place the resources to achieve ongoing external and internal communications to achieve better outcomes for older people.
- Fundraising Strategy with clear fundraising targets for Grants and Trust applications, community and corporate partnership targets that will promote organisational growth of unrestricted funding

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

- Deliver a programme of ongoing evaluation to articulate the impact of our work effectively.
- Analyse and use the learning from our impact measurement to identify areas for improvement, growth and development.

GOVERNANCE

- Continue to comply with the requirements of the law and best practice.
- Develop and maintain an effective staff team and Board of Directors always complying with good governance practice.
- Continue to develop a proactive strategic approach to empowering older people.



GLOSSARY

Loneliness: A subjective feeling of sadness or emotional pain caused by feeling alone or not having a much-wanted personal connection with another person such as with a partner or friends. Someone who feels lonely may have very few social connections, or they may have lots of social connections but still feel lonely and lack that important personal connection.

Isolation: An objective state of not having contact with others, friends, or society. Someone who is isolated may not necessarily feel lonely and may be content, though many isolated people also have an associated feeling of loneliness and may be cut off from important services or resources.

Reasonable adjustments: What Engage with Age does so that a person with a disability does not experience barriers to participation. This would include adjusting physical layouts or communications.

Under-represented groups: sections within the populations of older people who are currently under-represented within Engage with Age and/ or the wider older people's sector. This can include people living with disabilities, people from ethnic minority communities, or men (who are currently under represented within EWA's participants).

Marginalised communities: Groups of people who experience exclusion and/ or discrimination for reasons that can include economic, social, political, or cultural factors.

Influencers and decision makers: People in a range of roles which can affect services or the perception of older people, such as elected representatives, advisors, researchers, journalists, community leaders and people on social media.



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Thank you for supporting Engage with Age. Together, we can help older people stay connected, valued, and engaged in their communities.

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