

TAKING STOCK²⁰²⁶

Is Government keeping its commitments to older people?

A REPORT FROM THE
ALLIANCE OF AGE SECTOR NGOS

JULY 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SCORE CARD

Community
Foundation
Ireland

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Introduction

The ‘Taking Stock’ Report and Score Card 2026 is the first for the coalition (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independents) under the new Programme for Government: *Securing Ireland’s Future*. The report considers how Government has performed for older people and an ageing population across its first 18 months in office.

This year’s Report and Score Card is the third edition in the series for the Alliance of Age Sector NGO’s and covers key areas which, if addressed, could resolve major systemic issues for older people and our rapidly ageing population. These areas include healthy ageing, housing, financial security, ageism, policy coordination and monitoring, and mainstreaming ageing, among a range of other relevant domain areas.

The Alliance introduced the Report and Score Card as a mechanism to review progress on key policy commitments to older people, given the absence of a State supported approach to monitoring or implementing the now fourteen-year-old National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).

As in previous editions, our panel of experts operating at senior level across the age sector in Ireland have closely examined the promises made to older people and our ageing population and have graded the Government on its efforts to fulfil these commitments.

The grades allocated represent the collective views of the eight member CEOs (and their organisations) of the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs rather than the views of any individual CEO or organisation. This CEO network includes the following:

Fran Brennan

CEO, Active Retirement Ireland

Karen Horgan

CEO, Age & Opportunity

Seán Moynihan

CEO, ALONE

Andy Heffernan

CEO, Alzheimer Society of Ireland

Michael Smyth

CEO, COPE Galway

Paula O’Reilly

CEO, Irish Hospice Foundation

Pat Mellon

CEO, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament

Áine Brady

CEO, Third Age Ireland.

Areas of Concern in Score Card 2026

Areas of some concern that the Alliance has scored the Government C, D, E and F grades on are in relation to its commitments to:

- “Design and implement preventive programmes and services (e.g. reducing falls, preventing and reversing frailty), that enable older adults to live and thrive with the best possible health”.

 [HSE Public Health Strategy 2025-2030]

Ireland’s ageing population is a positive sign of increased longevity, but we are failing to support people to age well. The expected number of healthy life years at 65 has decreased from 13.6 years in 2019 to 11.6 years for men in 2024, and 11.9 for women.

Falls, in particular, are a major, rising health issue for older adults in Ireland, with one in eight people over 70 requiring medical attention for a fall annually, equating to roughly 62,000 people (Briggs et al, 2026). Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospital admissions in this group, often causing hip fractures, reduced mobility, severe fear of falling, and loss of independence, with costs projected to exceed €2 billion by 2030.

Ireland currently has no national falls prevention strategy. Improving access to dedicated falls clinics, systematically reviewing medications that increase falls risk, and investing in strength, balance and cardiovascular prevention programmes should be central to planning services for an ageing population.

- “Enabling people to die at home where appropriate”.

 [The National Adult Palliative Care Policy (2024)]

Strategic Objective 2 in the *National Adult Palliative Care Policy* focuses on care in the right place at the right time, meaning that people should be able to access high-quality palliative care, where and when they need it. Whilst progress is being made, access to out-of-hours care for people, regardless of geography, finances, or diagnosis, remains very challenging.

Progress has been made in nursing home settings, regarded by many older people as their home and one which people will often express a wish to die in. Irish Hospice Foundation’s Caru programme has developed a targeted campaign to promote the implementation of Advance Care Planning documentation within Nursing Homes which can support staff to prevent avoidable hospital admissions at end of life.

There have been delays in the review and ongoing development of educational materials and courses for GP and primary care staff, but this work is being progressed through discussions with key stakeholders and allocated funding support. A significant research project examining the arrangements that are in place for the provision of out-of-hours home-based palliative care and which will identify suitable arrangements for future service provision has been contracted out. However, real momentum will be needed over the next period to address the issues older people face at end of life, particularly in relation to out-of-hours care.

- “Design a Statutory Homecare Scheme to allow people to stay in their own home for as long as possible”.

 [Programme for Government 2025]

This commitment to “**Design** a Statutory Homecare Scheme...” represents a dilution of previous Government policy commitments to “**Introduce** a Statutory Scheme to support people to live in their own homes...” (Programme for Government, *Our Shared Future*, 2020).

Home support is an efficient and cost-effective alternative to overused hospital facilities. However, there is growing demand for these services and long wait lists. Demand for home support continues to outpace supply, and challenges with staffing, delivery, consistency, and equity of access persist. Waiting lists for home support remain at similar levels in June 2026 compared to January 2025.

Difficulties with carer recruitment and retention, together with pay disparities between public and private sector roles, have resulted in variation in service availability across regions, reducing equity of access and creating an ‘Eircode lottery’.

Of note, the Health (Amendment) (Home Support Providers) Bill 2025 passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas in June 2026, which will ensure for the first time that all home support providers in Ireland are regulated. This will introduce HIQA quality standards for home support, a welcome step forward.

- “Progressively increase weekly pension payments”.

 [Programme for Government 2025]

The Programme for Government 2025 describes the State Pension as “the bedrock of pension provision in Ireland” and commits to “strengthen the safety net for our older citizens”.

Yet this commitment to “Progressively increase weekly pension payments...” represents a dilution of a previous and more specific Government policy commitment to “Protect the incomes of older people through the delivery of the commitment to benchmark State pension payments”, as was set out in the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025*.

The absence of pension benchmarking and indexation leaves older people particularly vulnerable to inflation. Ireland is now the only country in the eurozone without a system of benchmarking the state pension. This is despite recommendations included in the *Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023*, the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025* and the *Report of the Commission on Pensions*.

- **“Deliver universal and targeted evidence-informed approaches to promote healthy behaviours and address loneliness, prevent ill-health, disability and early death, such as the Making Every Contact Count Programme and Chronic Disease Management Programme”.**

E- [HSE Public Health Strategy 2025-2030]

The commitment to address loneliness, as part of this Strategy, represents a dilution of previous, more specific Government policy commitments relating to loneliness.

A specific commitment to develop a plan to address loneliness was included in the 2020 Programme for Government (Our Shared Future 2020) together with a number of time bound Government policy documents across recent years (including the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025*, the *Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025*, and the *Sláintecare Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023*).

To date, Government has not assigned funding or staff to develop such a plan, despite passing of a Seanad motion in 2024 calling on Government to fulfil the Programme for Government 2020 commitment to develop a plan aimed at tackling loneliness and isolation, particularly among older people.

Ireland has the highest levels of lonely people in the EU with over 20% of respondents reporting feeling lonely (EU Commission 2022). Loneliness has been shown to accelerate biological ageing (Wilson and Keffer, 2025) and is an independent risk factor for nursing home admission (Hanratty, Stow et al, 2018). Rates of loneliness have been shown to increase after the age of 67 (Ward, Layte and Kenny, 2019). While some responses to loneliness are in place, in the main these are led by the community and voluntary sector. Evidence-informed policies and interventions are required.

- **“Progress an Action Plan on delivering housing for older people through: increased delivery of social housing for older people; increased delivery of more suitable homes and choice for older people in private housing; and increased choice for older people to support voluntary rightsizing”.**

C [Delivering Homes, Building Communities, 2025-2030]

Recent years have seen a significant increase in housing instability for older people with, in particular, a notable rise in the number of older renters. The number of households in this age group renting in the private sector has increased by 83 per cent since Census 2016.

In addition, homelessness is a growing issue among older adults.

There is an inadequate supply of suitable homes that meet the specific requirements of older people. Although some important projects have progressed, such as the Housing with Supports Demonstrator Project in Inchicore, there is a lack of alternative housing stock that would permit older persons to trade down while retaining their social connections in the communities where they have built their lives.

The number of people aged 70+ looking to social housing has doubled in a decade, with over 2,000 in this age cohort on social housing waiting lists in 2025.

- “Coordinate ageing-related policies across all levels of government”.

E [Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing (2022), of which Ireland is a signatory at Ministerial level]

While Ireland has many policies and plans relevant to the lives of older people, a lack of clear implementation plans, dedicated funding, and monitoring mechanisms often hinders progress.

The 2013 *National Positive Ageing Strategy* remains the primary blueprint for age-related policy. An implementation plan for this Strategy, however, was never developed. No allocation of ring-fenced funding was ever provided. Annual reports on progress were never published. Despite a commitment to do so, there is a continued absence of evidence of oversight of implementation of the Strategy by the relevant Cabinet Committee (originally listed in the 2013 Strategy as a responsibility for the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy). One-day National Positive Ageing Strategy Stakeholder Forums were last hosted by the Department of Health in 2017, 2018 and 2019 with no such forums held in the subsequent six plus years.

Government, most recently, has proposed that a cross-departmental group, under the auspices of the Commission on Care for Older People, will “consider whether the supports for positive ageing across the life course are fit-for-purpose” and “prepare a detailed implementation plan for the selected options to enable positive ageing”. This work is currently scheduled as part of Module 3 of the work of the Commission on Care for commencement c. late 2026; 14 years post launch of the Positive Ageing Strategy.

- “Develop an implementation plan so as to translate Goals and Objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy into action on the ground” (2013) *and* “The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, chaired by the Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy” (2013)

F- [National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013]

No implementation plan was ever developed or allocation of ring-fenced funding ever provided for this now 14-year-old Strategy.

Despite a commitment to do so, there is a continued absence of evidence of oversight of implementation of the Strategy by the relevant Cabinet Committee (originally listed in the 2013 Strategy as a responsibility for the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy).

The big ticket promises which were heard throughout the late 2024 election cycle and the Government's first eighteen months in office, such as "ensuring that pensions remain robust, and allowances reflect the realities of older people's lives" (*Fianna Fáil policy to support older generation*, November 2024) or the commitments to appoint a "Commissioner for Positive Ageing" and "Implement a nationwide 'Exercise is Medicine' exercise programme" (*Fine Gael's Guarantee for Older People*, November 2024) have yet to materialise.

One year into this *Programme for Government*, Score Card 2026 shows a difficult road ahead for the Government if the pace of change stays the same.

Older people and our wider ageing population are still waiting for meaningful change on issues that they perpetually feel the negative impact of, such as the need to benchmark the State pension, the need for a State backed plan to tackle loneliness and isolation, health services which emphasise prevention and early intervention, supports to enable people to die at home where appropriate, sufficient workforce in the healthcare and home support sectors, and access to a range of housing options which provide appropriate housing choices for older people.



Areas Showing Positive Progress

Credit must be given where improvements have been made. The Government has progressed several key initiatives, detailed in the *Programme for Government 2025*, relevant to positive ageing.

Score Card 2026 can spotlight some welcome progress in areas such as the built environment and safety and security; both of which affect confidence on the part of the older adult and opportunities for social participation.

- **“Provide a dedicated maintenance budget to each local authority to maintain active travel infrastructure, including footpaths”.**

 [Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025]

Accessible, safe, and well-designed surroundings which offer walkable streets and green space will reduce injury risks, promote physical activity, and enhance mental well-being. Walkable neighbourhoods with accessible services contribute to reduction in chronic disease risk and improved mental health.

The significant funding allocations and evidence of large-scale local project delivery to support active travel is to be welcomed and will support older people in accessing key local services and amenities.

- **“Invest in the rollout of the Local Community Safety Partnerships and social and economic regeneration programmes to support communities experiencing high levels of crime, unemployment and social exclusion”.**

 [Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025]

Older people’s sense of safety is vital to their quality of life and strongly influences behaviours and decisions. Safety and security is not just about avoiding accidents; it is essential for creating the confidence, trust, and peace of mind necessary for older people to remain active and engaged in society.

The continued roll out and development of the Local Community Safety Partnerships across the country, with focused local action planning to follow, is to be welcomed and has the potential to play a significant role in promoting positive ageing.

- “Publish a new Rural Safety Strategy and support An Garda Síochána to expand successful approaches to tackling rural crime”.

B [Programme for Government –
Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025]

Overall, rural areas are widely regarded as safe places to live, provided that community connections are maintained and appropriate security supports are in place, though this is often balanced against concerns regarding isolation and crime. While rural areas, in the main, are perceived as safe, fear of crime can still be high among women over 65 and those who have previously experienced victimisation.

The *Rural Safety Plan 2025-2027*, developed in conjunction with the National Rural Safety Forum, is a welcome initiative which makes specific commitments to supporting older people in rural communities.



What Would Make a Difference?

Both the general election manifestos of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael together with the new Programme for Government contain a range of commitments to our older adult population that, if fully implemented, would deliver better outcomes for their day to day lived experience.

What is clear from Report and Score Card 2026 and previous editions is that progress can be very slow, and that Government has some way to go in many of the areas that were analysed.

It is clear from the more detailed, long read Report that an extensive range of issues will need to be addressed to enable our growing older adult population to age well. The Alliance would therefore encourage policy makers to consider both reports together and in detail.

The challenges of course are significant. The absence of an active, measurable and monitored whole-of-Government Strategy for ageing and older people would have any Government on the back foot. It is frustrating to repeatedly note that an implementation plan for the *National Positive Ageing Strategy* (2013) was never developed.

Almost every Government strategy and action plan, whether it is relating to health, transport, housing, the environment, financial security or connectivity, must be considered in the context of our ageing population and the ageing demographic they will serve.

In addition to the areas of deficit highlighted across both documents the Alliance would spotlight four investments which would make a real difference:

1. Development of a clear and practical Strategy for ageing and older people which supports effective cross-departmental working.

While policy for older people in Ireland is currently situated across the Departments of Health and Housing, the Age Alliance's 'Taking Stock' review highlights the extensive range of domain areas together with the policy decisions taken by a wide range of Government departments which impact on the lived experience of older people. Such an extensive set of 'boundary spanning' issues can only be effectively addressed through a single body operating across a range of departments.

The Age Alliance is therefore calling on Government to institute and **implement** a comprehensive, whole-of-government positive ageing framework in Ireland that looks beyond the care and medical needs of older people to protect all aspects of ageing and better ensure people in Ireland are empowered and supported to age well.

An effective whole-of-Government Strategy for ageing and older people requires:

- ▶ A top-level governmental commitment to older people – in the form of a Programme for Government Outcome which is actively monitored by a relevant Cabinet Committee.
- ▶ The allocation of specific responsibilities to government departments with such responsibilities underpinned by clear deliverables, timelines and performance indicators.
- ▶ Specified funding allocation tethered to each Strategic Outcome.

2. Appointment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People.

An Independent Commissioner would have a broad remit that recognises the full capacity and potential of older people, covering their needs and rights across the spectrum, not just in terms of health, care, frailty, and vulnerability.

An Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would provide an independent voice with the ability and capacity to engage with all Government departments, working in parallel and alongside the Minister. They would support a coordinated approach towards the implementation of strategies and actions relevant to the needs and rights of older people taking a role independent of any one department. An Independent Commissioner would support the effective mainstreaming of ageing across Government while also holding Government and public bodies to account.

3. Develop a State led campaign to promote an age-balanced image of society and counteract ageism.

Ageism has been revealed as deeply institutionalised throughout our services and systems and across wider society. The World Health Organization (WHO) has set out the numerous and harmful effects of ageism: shorter lifespan, diminished mental and physical health, isolation, lost commitment to the workplace, cognitive decline and reduced quality of life.

Government is best placed to position this as an issue of real importance and to resource an appropriate nationwide campaign. The Alliance, having direct links with a broad diversity of older people living in Ireland, is more than willing to play its part.

4. Recognise loneliness and social isolation as public health priorities and implement a fully resourced national action plan to address them.

Research shows that Ireland has the highest rates of loneliness in the EU. The Alliance calls on Government to support the development and implementation of the long-awaited Action Plan to tackle loneliness and isolation particularly among older people, as previously committed to in the *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025* and the 2020 Programme for Government (*Our Shared Future, 2020*).

If Government continue to fall short of its own estimations, older people and our future generations of older people will lose out.

Government, the Alliance would suggest, will require a renewed level of focus, drive and urgency to ensure older people's needs are prioritised over the course of their term.

Methodology

Taking Stock 2026 is the first Age Alliance analysis of the progress for older people under the current coalition; Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independents.

The Age Alliance has selected 27 headline policy commitments from across ‘Securing Ireland’s Future’ *and* a number of other key Government policy documents to track over the course of this Government’s term in office.

This shortlist of 27 policy commitments was chosen based on several core criteria:

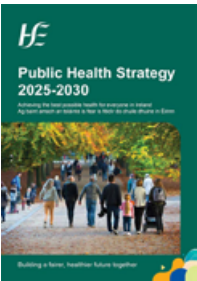
- That the commitment directly impacts older people.
- The commitment wording is clear and measurable.
- Achievement of the commitment is not subjective; it either has or has not been delivered.
- If delivered or achieved, the commitment has significant potential to improve (1) the environment for policy implementation relevant to ageing and older people or (2) the quality of life for people as we grow older in Ireland – or indeed both simultaneously.

The updated grades allocated represent the collective views of the eight-member Age Alliance CEO forum rather than the views of any individual. An explanation of the grades is provided in the table below;

Explanation of Grades:

A	Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives
B	Good effort, positive results for older people
C	Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting
D	Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people
E	Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people
F	Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing
N/A	Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment

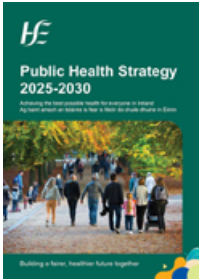
Of the 27 policy commitments that were considered four 'B' grades, eleven 'C' grades, eight 'D' grades, two 'E' grades and two 'F' grade were awarded.

TAKING STOCK 2026 SCORECARD					
Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Deliver universal and targeted evidence-informed approaches to promote healthy behaviours and address loneliness, prevent ill-health, disability and early death, such as the Making Every Contact Count Programme and Chronic Disease Management Programme”. (Related Government commitment graded as part of previous Score Card exercises: “Develop a plan aimed at tackling loneliness and isolation, particularly among older people” (<i>Programme for Government, 2020</i>))	 HSE Public Health Strategy 2025-2030	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Commitment to address loneliness as part of this Strategy represents a dilution of previous more specific Government policy commitments relating to loneliness made in the <i>Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020</i>, the <i>Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025</i>, the <i>Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 – 2025</i> and the <i>Sláintecare Strategy & Action Plan 2021-2023</i> – each of which included a commitment to “Develop a plan aimed at tackling loneliness, and isolation, particularly among older people”. ▶ Research shows that Ireland has the highest rates of loneliness in the EU. ▶ To date Government has not assigned funding or staff to develop such a plan despite passing of Seanad motion in 2024 calling on Government to fulfil the Programme for Government 2020 commitment to publish an Action Plan to Combat Loneliness and Isolation; and to establish an Expert Action Group on loneliness through the Department of the Taoiseach. ▶ Concerning that this specific priority was completely omitted from the <i>Programme for Government: Our Shared Future (2025)</i>.

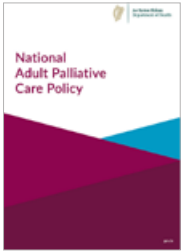
Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Design and implement preventive programmes and services (e.g. reducing falls, preventing and reversing frailty), that enable older adults to live and thrive with the best possible health”.	 HSE Public Health Strategy 2025-2030		‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		▶ Evidence of localised pockets of good practice and time bound initiatives including the Irish Hip Fracture database, FaME Ireland Falls Management Exercise Programme, and the ExWell Medical programme. ▶ Fall, are a major, rising health issue for older adults in Ireland, with one in eight people over 70 requiring medical attention for a fall annually, equating to roughly 62,000 people. ▶ Ireland currently has no funded national falls prevention strategy, despite strong international evidence that coordinated, multidisciplinary approaches can significantly reduce falls, fractures and pressure on emergency departments.
“Fund mental health supports across all Integrated Care Programme for Older People (ICPOP) teams”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025		‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		▶ Some early-stage evidence of workforce growth and increased funding in this area during lifetime of this Government, as part of Budget 2026. ▶ Further work is needed, and a gap analysis is currently underway to identify additional staffing requirements to support implementation of the Model of Care across HSE health regions.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Enabling people to die at home where appropriate”.	 National Adult Palliative Care Policy 2024	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Whilst progress is being made and access to end of life care at home forms part of the work currently underway, out-of-hours care for people, regardless of geography, finances, or diagnosis, remains very challenging. ▶ Hospitals remain the most common place of death, accounting for approximately 45% of deaths in the State. While 76% of people in Ireland express a preference to die at home, only about 23% currently do so.
“Continue to invest in palliative care to achieve full national coverage of hospice and community services”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Development is underway in key hospice projects. Delivery of hospices for the Midlands and the North-East regions must be prioritised without further delay.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Design a Statutory Homecare Scheme to allow people to stay in their own home for as long as possible”. (Related Government commitment graded as part of previous Score Card exercises: “Introduce a statutory scheme to support people to live in their own homes, which will provide equitable access to high-quality, regulated home care”. (<i>Programme for Government, 2020</i>))	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Commitment to “Design a Statutory Homecare Scheme...” represents a row back on or dilution of previous Government policy commitments to “Introduce a Statutory Scheme to support people to live in their own homes...” (<i>Programme for Government, 2020</i>) ▶ Difficulties with carer recruitment and retention together with pay disparities between public and private sector roles have resulted in variation in service availability across regions. ▶ The Health (Amendment) (Home Support Providers) Bill 2025 passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas in June 2026, which will ensure for the first time that all home support providers in Ireland are regulated. This will introduce HIQA quality standards for home support, a welcome step forward.
“Fully fund the Carer’s Guarantee”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Evidence of commitment to include within this year’s Estimates process.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Taking account of the work of the Commission on Care, we will publish, resource, and implement a National Action Plan that will: Ensure long-term care is timely, comprehensive, and affordable. Examine and enhance the mix of professional care options, including homecare, community-based care, independent living options and long-term residential care facilities”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Significant deliberation, consultation and research, on the part of the Commission on Care for Older People, has taken place. However, no action plan has yet been published. ▶ Demand for home support continues to outpace supply, and challenges with staffing, delivery, consistency, and equity of access persist. ▶ Significant withdrawal of community owned and not for profit nursing homes from the market. ▶ Limited evidence of scale up of demonstrator Housing with Supports project or other good practice independent living options.
“Build more public nursing home beds”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Evidence of investment in public nursing home beds, but not to sufficient scale to meet demand. At the end of 2025, there were 4,954 nursing home beds in public long-stay units. This is a slight reduction from the 4,982 beds at the end of 2024. The number of short stay beds in public units has reduced from 1,609 to 1,562 beds over the same period. ▶ The ESRI projects that Ireland’s long-term residential care bed requirements must increase by 61% to 80% (an extra 15,000 to 23,000 beds) by 2040. This demand is driven by a doubling of the over-85 population, but risks are compounded by ongoing rural closures and rising demand for complex dementia care.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting.

D: Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people.

F: Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Introduce the Auto Enrolment My Future Fund in September 2025 to provide workers with greater comfort and security regarding their retirement savings”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		B	▶ My Future Fund has been launched, although later than originally anticipated, in January 2026. This was a commitment under the last Programme for Government, and it had originally been intended to be introduced in 2024.
“People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning”	 Ireland’s National Skills Strategy 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		D	▶ Ireland’s lifelong learning participation rate increased from 14% in quarter 4 2023 to 16% in quarter 4 2024. ▶ However, data gathering and policy orientation in this field only encompasses those of working age. There is no strategy prioritising older people as a specific cohort. ▶ Continued reliance on Local Government, community, and NGO provision.

Explanation of Grades: **A:** Excellent, making a real difference to older people’s lives. **B:** Good effort, positive results for older people. **C:** Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting. **D:** Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people. **E:** Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people. **F:** Fail, taking steps that undermine older people’s wellbeing. **N/A:** Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment.

Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Work with the NTA to allow flexible pickups on Local Link and other bus routes in rural communities, as appropriate, enhancing service accessibility”	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Pockets of good practice in place such as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services, which could usefully be scaled up. ▶ Pick-ups and set downs on other services will continue to occur only at sanctioned locations. Local Authorities have statutory responsibility for bus stop approvals. The NTA is working with Local Link to increase the number of official stops along routes, with funding allocated to the Bus Stop Enhancement Programme to deliver this. ▶ Therefore, it is unlikely that this precise commitment will be achieved – but other actions are underway.
“Work to integrate Local Link transport routes with health services to improve access for individuals seeking care”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Pockets of good practice in place which could usefully be scaled up, including a pilot programme in Leitrim. However, this pilot began in 2020. ▶ Other transport pilot programmes are in progress, such as the Smart Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) pilot in Achill, which could also support access to health services. ▶ Updates state that “discussions are underway” on how to further progress this action. Inconsistent evidence, however, of significant national progress to date on this commitment.

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“Progressively increase weekly pension payments”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Commitment to “Progressively increase weekly pension payments...” represents a dilution of a previous and more specific Government policy commitment to “Protect the incomes of older people through the delivery of the commitment to benchmark State pension payments”. (<i>The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025</i>) ▶ Income inequality among older people, however, is now higher than among the general population. Older people living alone are one of the most financially exposed groups in the country. ▶ Although the rate of State Pension was increased in Budget 2026, the absence of pension benchmarking and indexation leaves older people particularly vulnerable to inflation. Ireland is now the only country in the eurozone without a system of benchmarking the state pension.
“Examine improvements to key ancillary benefits such as the Fuel Allowance, Household Benefits Package and Living Alone Allowance to support vulnerable groups”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Vague and discretionary commitment with no specific target set. ▶ No movement or uplift, to date, on either the Household Benefits Package or the Living Alone Allowance since formation of Government. However, the rate of Fuel Allowance has been increased by €5, and a temporary extension to the season was provided in 2026.

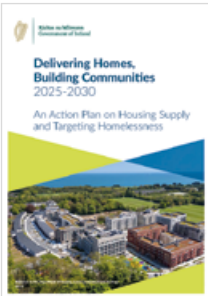
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“Examine what modifications or changes may be made to support women who currently fall outside the existing schemes to qualify for a State Pension”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Evidence suggests work and “examination” underway, but no changes introduced to date.
“Mandate local authorities to find suitable sites for housing specifically designed for older adults, ensuring accessible options within local communities”. “Support AHBs in developing and managing senior housing with onsite support services, fostering safe, supportive communities”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► This mandate has yet to be applied to local authorities. ► No specific target has been set for provision of “suitable sites”. ► A commitment is in place to review cross-departmental funding mechanisms but awaiting delivery/completion of such a review. ► The demonstrator Housing with Supports project for older adults is now operational but no commitments have been made, as of yet, to support further scale up of this model.

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Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Progress an Action Plan on delivering housing for older people through: increased delivery of social housing for older people; increased delivery of more suitable homes and choice for older people in private housing; and increased choice for older people to support voluntary rightsizing”.	 Delivering Homes, Building Communities, 2025-2030	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		C	▶ It is understood that development of the Action Plan is underway. This new Action Plan must, however, consider strong commitments made previously in <i>Housing Options for our Ageing Population</i>. ▶ The number of households in the 65+ age-group renting in the private sector has increased by 83 per cent since Census 2016. ▶ Further increase in the numbers of older people on the waiting list for social housing in 2025. ▶ No national ‘rightsizing’ strategy.
“Provide a dedicated maintenance budget to each local authority to maintain active travel infrastructure, including footpaths”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time		B	▶ Problems related to footpaths were the most common issue raised in national walkability audits. ▶ Although further work is needed, there is evidence of significant funding allocations and local project delivery to support active travel.

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Government commitment (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/ POLICY REFERENCED)	Government Strategy or Policy Document	GRADE January 2024	GRADE December 2024	GRADE July 2026	Rationale
“Invest in the rollout of the Local Community Safety Partnerships and social and economic regeneration programmes to support communities experiencing high levels of crime, unemployment and social exclusion”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Evidence of rollout of Partnerships across the country with local action planning to follow.
“Publish a new Rural Safety Strategy and support An Garda Síochána to expand successful approaches to tackling rural crime”.	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			► Rural Safety Plan 2025-2027 developed in conjunction with the National Rural Safety Forum. ► Four main priority areas to be targeted as part of same include: Community Safety and Engagement; Property Crime; Roads Policing and Animal & Wildlife Crime.

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“Publish a national policy on adult safeguarding for the health and social care sector”. “Explore the establishment of a National Safeguarding Body to ensure the health, safety and welfare of vulnerable adults.”	 Programme for Government – Securing Ireland’s Future, 2025	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ A <i>National Policy Framework for the Health and Social Care sector</i> was published in December 2025. This was welcomed, but gives rise to a number of limitations. For the provision of adult safeguarding to be effective, a National Safeguarding Policy covering all sectors across society is required rather than limiting such a policy solely to the health and social care sector. ▶ While work on a general scheme of a Bill on adult safeguarding is reported to be underway, this has not been completed. Such legislation would most usefully provide for an Independent National Adult Safeguarding Body. ▶ An Adult Safeguarding Bill, receiving all party support, was originally published in 2017. The Joint Oireachtas Committee stated at the time that the enactment of such legislation was an urgent matter.
“Combat ageism through awareness campaigns and by encouraging the media and other opinion-making actors to give an age-balanced image of society” (2013)	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013				▶ No evidence of any Government awareness campaigns to combat ageism.

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“Coordinate ageing-related policies across all levels of government”.	 Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing (2022), of which Ireland is a signatory at Ministerial level	‘New’ policy commitment included in Score Card for first time			▶ Some evidence of increased coordination across the Departments of Health and Housing, with a standalone Minister of State for Older People. ▶ The now 14-year-old <i>National Positive Ageing Strategy</i> (2013) however remains as the primary blueprint for age-related policy.
“Develop an implementation plan so as to translate Goals and Objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy into action on the ground” (2013) “The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, chaired by the Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy” (2013)	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013		 Fall in grade awarded		▶ No implementation plan was ever developed for this 14-year-old Strategy, and the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy did not oversee implementation. ▶ Government, most recently, has proposed that a cross-departmental group, under the auspices of the Commission on Care for Older People, will “consider whether the supports for positive ageing across the life course are fit-for-purpose” and “prepare a detailed implementation plan for the selected options to enable positive ageing”. This work is currently scheduled as part of Module 3 of the work of the Commission on Care for commencement c. late 2026; 14 years post launch of the Positive Ageing Strategy.

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“To support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland”.	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013				▶ Evidence of additional investment in lived experience research and in general older adult/public consultation. ▶ Continued investment in key research initiatives; TILDA and PPI Ignite Network. ▶ Healthy and Positive Ageing Index's (HaPAI, Department of Health) most recent framework report was produced in 2019. ▶ A review or evaluation of the <i>National Positive Ageing Strategy</i> (2013) has yet to be conducted.
“Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities” (2013)	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013		  Grade holding at same level		▶ Ongoing rollout of funding streams to support participation (for example, grants for community halls and community groups). In addition, the Programme for Government Commitment to implement an e Inclusion Strategy was welcome. ▶ Rising cost of living and transport can limit participation by older adults. ▶ No older age based (65+) participation targets for arts, education or lifelong learning.

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About the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs

The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs (the Alliance) represents the collective thinking of eight significant NGOs working in the age sector.

Separately, we provide vital services for older people, support older people to contribute to and participate in community life and advocate for better policies, services and supports for older people at national and local level. Together, we collaborate to combat ageism and to seek action on the specific issues that make older people's lives more difficult than they need to be. We work together to support Ireland in becoming a better place in which to grow older. The Alliance is committed to collaborative leadership and the pooling of our capacity and resources to maximise our collective impact.

The eight member organisations include; Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, ALONE, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, COPE Galway, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and Third Age Ireland.



TAKING STOCK 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SCORE CARD

