

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An ageing population is one of the success stories of modern society. However, while many people remain well, engaged and active into later life, increasing age brings a higher risk of long-term medical conditions such as frailty, dementia, disability, dependence and/or social isolation (Oliver et al., 2014). As more people live longer and manage several conditions affecting their health, they require services that support them to remain as well as possible, for as long as possible. There is evidence that prevention and early management of frailty can reduce many of the major negative health-related outcomes associated with ageing, including functional decline and dependency (Clegg, et al.2013).

One of the major challenges posed by an ageing population is the ability of healthcare professionals to understand, recognise and manage frailty (O’Shea, 2017, Kennedy, et al. 2021).

Frailty is a dynamic state. Its onset and progression can be reduced and even reversed if early intervention and correct management strategies are set in place. Early identification may provide an opportunity to identify pre-frail and frail individuals, and direct them to appropriate preventative health interventions to improve personal health and well-being (Gwyther, et al., 2018).

However, to do this, healthcare

professionals need a working knowledge of the fundamental aspects of frailty and the malleability of this condition. A number of reports, including two surveys undertaken by the Health Service Executive (HSE), suggest that healthcare professionals in general have a poor understanding and view frailty as an inevitable part of ageing. In response, the NCPOP developed The National Frailty Education Programme to provide healthcare professionals with the knowledge and skills required to deliver effective care to older people living with frailty, wherever they access health services.

## KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NFEP:

The National Frailty Education Programme refers to a programme of work that includes all of the following:

The National Frailty Facilitators’ development programme:

- “Recognising Frailty-Insights from TILDA”: a one -day bespoke programme developed for National Frailty Facilitators by The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA).
- Facilitator network development workshop and resources.

The Fundamentals of Frailty education programme that is delivered locally to healthcare professionals by a network of facilitators.

# - PARTNERSHIPS -



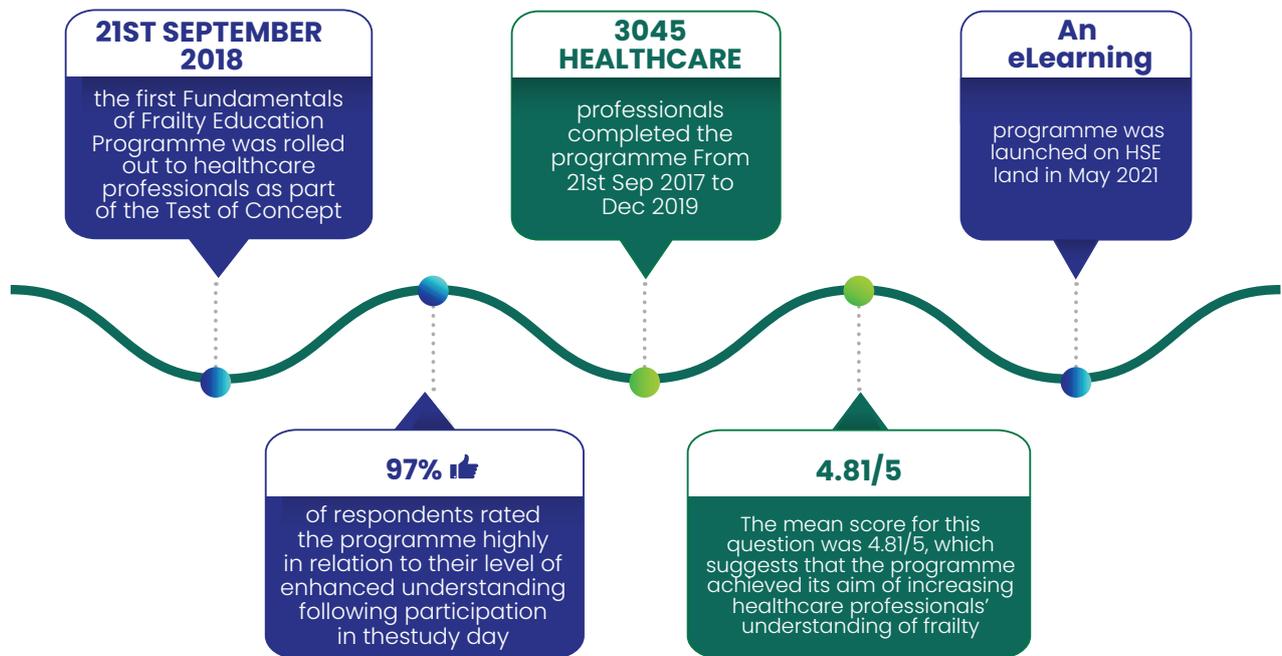
## Programme Collaborations



The National Frailty Education Programme (NFEP) was developed in collaboration with the HSE, the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, National Acute Medicine /National Emergency Medicine Clinical Programmes, in partnership with The Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) and supported by the Office of the Nursing & Midwifery Service Director (ONMSD).

Quality Improvement (QI) methodology informed each stage of the programme design and the roll out of the programme nationally. Using QI allowed for small tests of change, to inform the development of the programme content and delivery. Three, Plan Do Study (PDSA) cycles were completed and each PDSA cycle informed the next phase of the programme design. The deliverables of the Test of Concept included:

- The development of evidence based interprofessional education programme “The Fundamentals of Frailty”. This programme is designed to provide participants with an understanding of the fundamental elements of the “geriatric giants” of falls, incontinence, delirium, impaired cognition and increased susceptibility to the side effects of medications.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TILDA and the development of a bespoke education programme “Recognising Frailty-Insights from TILDA” which is provided to facilitators who deliver the Fundamentals of Frailty as part of their facilitator development programme. This MOU provides a unique collaboration between a Longitudinal Study and a service provider and supports the translation of research to practice.
- The development of a cadre of interprofessional Frailty Facilitators to deliver the Fundamentals of Frailty to their colleagues locally. The NFEP is underpinned by the



philosophy that learning together enhances collaboration and coordination, builds relationships and improves patient outcomes (WHO 2010).

The programme is delivered in an integrated manner, across professions, Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations (CHOs).

The success of the programme is dependent on local facilitators delivering the programme to health professionals in a credible and meaningful way, sharing their own professional experiences and their learning and insights from TILDA.

On 21st September 2018, the first Fundamentals of Frailty Education Programme was delivered to healthcare professionals as part of the Test of Concept. From 21st September 2017 to December 2019, 3045 healthcare professionals completed the programme. Ninety-seven percent of respondents stated their level of enhanced understanding increased following participation in the study day, which suggests that the programme achieved its aim of increasing healthcare professionals' understanding of frailty.

In early 2020, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, face to face education ceased. Due to the disproportionate adverse impact of COVID-19 on older adults and the subsequent increase in people presenting with frailty an on-line Fundamentals of Frailty programme was developed to provide healthcare professionals with access to the programme content. The online learning programme became available to access in May 2021. Due to a significant HSE cyber-attack in May 2021, data on the numbers who had completed the programme was unavailable until August 2021. Between August and December 2021, the eLearning programme was accessed 3,864 times by a total of 644 learners. The conclusions from a learning impact study demonstrate that the eLearning programme is of value to learners, and that engagement with the programme has led to an increase in their knowledge and confidence.

A recurring theme from the PDSA cycles related to the ability to release staff from clinical duties to attend a one-day education programme. Yet, participants felt learning together with health professionals from different backgrounds and services provided them with an opportunity to learn from each other, in a way that learning in professional silos or on-line alone, doesn't facilitate. The solution to future programme delivery requires flexibility of access and therefore a hybrid/blended approach to the programme delivery was developed.

Blended learning is an approach to education that combines online educational materials with traditional place-based classroom methods. The revised Fundamentals of Frailty will be delivered using this model. It is proposed that each facilitator network will adapt the blend of modules delivered online or in the classroom based on their local needs and the expertise available to deliver the programme modules. However, all networks will be required to deliver the CGA module in a classroom setting, to provide opportunity for participants to learn about each other's roles. They must also ensure that the programme continues to be delivered in an interprofessional, integrated manner.

The NCPOP have demonstrated that a National Frailty Education Programme enhances participants' understanding of frailty and frailty assessments; thereby ensuring earlier recognition of frailty, improved healthcare management, and better outcomes for older adults living with frailty. In order to ensure the sustainability and ongoing development of the NFEP the NCPOP suggest the concept of Project ECHO is tested with a number of facilitator networks. Project ECHO (Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes), is an evidence based methodology developed to connect participants in a virtual community with their peers, where they share support, guidance and feedback. These communities focus on case-based discussions, knowledge sharing and educational components with the intent of expanding capacity, spreading knowledge and accelerating collective learning. A number of project ECHOs across other specialty areas have been successfully set up across Ireland.

The NFEP will continue to be a key pillar of the Irish Frailty Network of the Irish Gerontological Society and the All-Ireland Frailty Network.

The recommendations in this report reflect the strategic direction and operational challenges being addressed by the health system. This includes Slaintecare (Government of Ireland 2019), goals and associated workforce recommendations, the HSE Corporate Plan (2022-2025), National Service Plan (2023) and Winter Plan (2023/24).

The NFEP model has been identified as a key enabler to integrated care, advancing inter-professional working and collaboration, while adopting an age attuned approach to improve the realignment of health care systems, to better meet the needs of older people. The NFEP continues to be a key enabler in educating and pivoting the workforce towards an age friendly health system.

# THE NATIONAL FRAILITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME PROCESS MAP



# NFEP IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

## STEP 1

TILDA-"Insights into Frailty"  
Education Programme

Education Dates Confirmed with TILDA  
(Each Network to attend in groups of 10)

Notifications sought from relevant  
managers & directors of services

Pre & Post survey to evaluate participants  
knowledge Pre & Post attendance at TILDA

Developed FAQs document  
Memorandum of Understanding

Engaged with TILDA participants/nominees  
& agreed scheduling of dates

Communicated with each group Pre & Post  
TILDA session to ensure evaluation complete

NCPOP Clinical Lead communications to  
local clinicians to confirm nominees  
trained in local area & sites

Develop Facilitators workshop and  
deliver workshops locally in each network

Develop Fundamentals of Frailty  
Education Programme

Establish an education working group  
with experts from gerontology

Develop Fundamentals of Frailty Programme  
Presentation and Slide Notes

Programme sign off from NCPOP  
Frailty Sub-group Clinical Advisory Group  
(CAG) & Working Advisory Group (WAG)

Category 1 Approval to Nursing  
& Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)

Allocation of PPARS Code: 72206646  
For capturing education activity on HR system

## STEP 2

Facilitator Development Workshop

Overview of the day & agree  
objectives of the workshop

Present one module of  
'Fundamentals of Frailty'

Strong focus on team building  
activities and role of the facilitator

Q&A sessions

Agree local plan for delivery of  
'Fundamentals of Frailty' Locally

Findings of Day communicated  
to group by NCPOP Nurse Leads

Complete report for each  
HG & CHO

## STEP 3

Fundamentals of Frailty  
Programme Delivery

- Agree educational schedule
- Agree who will facilitate each session  
(minimum 2 per day)
- Invite guest facilitators as required
- Source venue for role out locally

Local database & register  
of attendees process agreed

Evaluation completed by each participant

Evaluations sent to NCPOP  
Director of Nursing

Evaluations inform national programme  
review and local OP initiatives