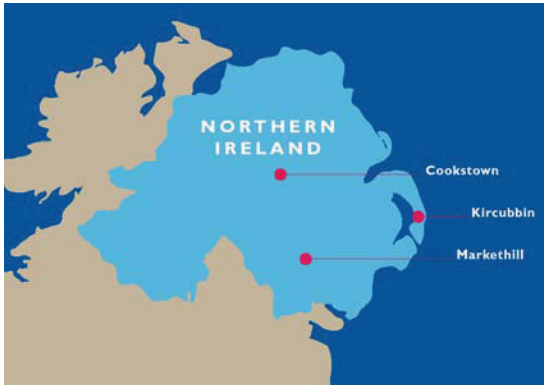




O4O : Older People for Older People
Independent living • active communities • flexible services

Northern Ireland



In Northern Ireland the **O4O** project team are based at Queen's University, Belfast. Older people in Northern Ireland have lived through many years of social, political and economic unrest which has resulted in low levels of social capital and high levels of mistrust between both neighbours and strangers. In this context, the **O4O** Project Manager elected to work with existing voluntary and charitable

groups to help them build capacity for social enterprise. She facilitated a process in which existing staff and volunteers within organisations considered their organisational and individual needs in relation to providing and increasing services available to older people. Preparatory community engagement work helped participants to engage with the principles of **O4O**.





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O4O Cookstown Limited

The Project Manager worked with a group of older volunteers which was founded 25 years ago to address the lack of community activities and services available for older people in rural mid-Ulster. They elected to work with **O4O** in order to:

- extend their existing lunch club and meals on wheels service to a wider geographical area
- develop a restaurant using food sourced and harvested from local farms and allotments by older people
- provide a drop in centre for older people to source information on rights and entitlements
- explore ways to grow membership and maximise income generated from an existing retail outlet

O4O contracted an independent training consultant to provide business management and good governance training. This has resulted in the group consolidating its aims and working in partnership with a variety of statutory and voluntary sector organisations and has itself launched as **O4O** Cookstown Limited (Opportunities for Older People) in new premises. It now has an open-door policy and runs as a lunch club, arts and social facility, and as a signposting office for welfare benefits and rights information on behalf of Age Northern Ireland.





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Markethill – Saver Naver

In South Armagh O4O are working with 'Saver Naver', a peer support organisation for victims and survivors of the conflict. Here, O4O is supporting development of a 'drop in' centre run by volunteers and an outreach service to older members of the community experiencing social isolation. The 'drop in' centre is based in the converted stables of a renovated building and provides a number of services to older people including, alternative therapies and counselling. It also provides a locus for social activities and a cafe. This O4O addresses a number of needs in a rural area where good relations and inter-community contact has historically been as minimal as the opportunity to access transport and emergency medical aid. Here, O4O is supporting a culture of neighbourliness and helps to fulfil a number of gaps in how older people access essential services.





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Independent living • active communities • holistic services



Ards Peninsula – Cuan FM

In the Ards peninsula **O4O** has worked with older people to develop a pilot community radio station, *Cuan FM*, that provides a service tailored to the needs of residents. Programs are a mix of factual and light entertainment material, with both content and delivery focussing on the broad determinants of health and well-being. Research for the programmes is carried out by older people who also edit the final content. This **O4O** is directed at addressing inter-generational and inter-community tensions as well as building the capacity of older people. It encourages partnership working with younger people and promotes inter-generational understanding. **O4O Cuan FM** can also be seen as an extension of the Good Morning/Good Neighbour projects that exist in Northern Ireland.

The Future

The resources required to sustain each of these **O4O** initiatives are different. For *Cuan FM*, **O4O** is working in partnership with local communities and statutory service providers to secure and consolidate resources that will enable the pilot to become self-sustaining. *Saver Naver* was initially grant dependent but anticipates moving to self-sustainability from income generated through service provision and by securing service level agreements with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Victims' Service. Age Concern Cookstown's new, larger premises provide expanded trading and retail opportunities and the **O4O** business plan projects growth from activities including the development of service level agreements with the local health trust and council.