

Engage with Age is a partnership organisation working to improve the quality of life, health and well being of older people in South and East Belfast and Castlereagh, connecting older people to each other and to the community, and influencing decision-makers.

New Older People's Commissioner Announced!
Engage With Age welcomes the appointment of (former EWA board member) Claire Keating as the new older people's commissioner.

The First N.I. Pensioners Parliament a Great Success

Older people from throughout Belfast were amongst the 180 participants from across the province gathered in Belfast during June to take part in the first Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament. The two day event, which was organised by Age Sector Platform and officially launched by Junior Ministers Jonathan Bell MLA and Martina Anderson MLA, involved people from every county in Northern Ireland deciding on the main issues of concern for pensioners today.

Over the two days in June this summer, the Holiday Inn in Belfast became a hub for democratic decision making as Members of the Pensioners Parliament (MPPs) asked questions and voted on issues such as **energy prices, food, fear of crime, health and social care and pensions.**

Committee members from Age Sector Platform commented: "Each stage of the Pensioners Parliament has been fully democratic with every interested older person given an equal voice. The response to the entire process has been fantastic, and we are very excited about how we will be able to use the recommendations from the Parliament to influence our decision makers in the coming year."

An extensive survey was carried out with over 1,200 older people in Northern Ireland, identifying the main areas of concern for pensioners and 24 motions have been passed which will form the basis for campaigning in the coming year. Following the Parliament, a report has been drafted and distributed to the Northern Ireland Assembly, MLAs, MPs, councils, statutory bodies, the private sector and other relevant organisations.



Seniors Forum members attending the Parliament

A number of prominent speakers addressed the Parliament over the two days, including speakers from the Utility Regulator, the PSNI, the Health and Social Care Board and the Older People's Advocate's office. Expert panels on each main area of concern were also present to answer questions from the floor.

As one delegate explained: "Following the Parliament, we as older people must ensure that our voice is heard by the new Assembly on these issues. As a large and growing section of the population, our voice is only going to become stronger and more important over the coming years; and older people have much to contribute. Our experience and knowledge can really help assist policy and decision makers in the years to come".

For more information on the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament, visit www.pensionersparliament.org or phone **028 9031 2089**.



Questions for the panel at the Belfast local Parliament



Francis Hughes addresses the Belfast local parliament



Panel answer questions during a discussion

INDIVIDUALS

Activities & Information

Summer Fun

Over the past few months thanks to a generous grant from Ulster Garden Villages, Engage With Age has again this year been able to run a programme of activities and outings for less active older people in the community. With the assistance of our various partner organisations we aim to target those who have less opportunity to get and about than others and offer them the chance to take part in an enjoyable programme of outings and visits to various places of interest in Northern Ireland.

As part of our on-going work in combating social isolation the summer (and autumn) programme provides the chance to get out to see somewhere new, meet others, make new friends and find out about other things they can get involved in. The feedback we have been getting from participants has been very positive and people really enjoy the chance to visit places they would not otherwise get to such as the Antrim coast, the historic city of Derry and the Newry & Mourne Museum at Bagnalls Castle.

We would welcome the assistance of any groups or agencies who can help us to identify and target

those most in need of a day out and the chance to re-connect with others of their own age group. For further information this programme please give us a call on **02890 649649**.

Period costumes fashion parade at Bagnalls Castle.



Admiring the flowers at Glenarm Castle gardens.

Enjoying a stroll around the pier in Carnlough



Inter-generational friendships built across the city and beyond !

As part of our on-going partnership with Springboard Opportunities Ltd we are now into our third inter-generational project in what has turned out to be a very successful and worthwhile venture. Having recently teamed up with North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum, older people from the north and south of the city took part in a six week programme with younger adults from across Belfast and also from the Dublin area.

The programme was taken a stage further, using various media such as art, games and film to act as a catalyst to get younger and older people inter-acting with one another and sharing their experiences. Some of those taking part said they were reluctant to get involved at the start but once the programme got going they really enjoyed every session.

Not surprising the indoor games session went down a treat, especially when the new X Box 360 and Kinect Sports was brought out !! There was even a few tears shed at the finale event when the young

people presented their work and told about how much they had gained from the whole programme.

Do you feel that you get on well with younger people ? If so we would be happy to invite you to join the on-going programme, we are always looking for new participants to have a go and enjoy the experience ! For more information please contact Stephen Gourley, Development Officer (South Belfast) on **02890 649649**



Clockwise from left: Sam Gordon makes some new friends over tea & biscuits!, Inter-generational group photo, Inter-generational mural painting.

GROUPS

Activities & Information



Community Arts projects



NBCAI Side by Side arts project, Finaghy

Engage With Age teamed up with the New Belfast Community Arts Initiative again this year to promote several arts projects in local community centres. Many people not usually familiar with arts and crafts got involved in felt making, painting, poetry, mosaic and even recording a piece of music using a range of instruments from various parts of the world!

One of the most successful ventures this year was a 'Side by Side' project which brought together the RNIB Finaghy group with members and friends of South Belfast Lifestyle Forum. The result was among other things a beautifully colourful felt wall hanging in which everyone was able to have a go whether they were fully or partially sighted!!

It's always amazing how creative people can be and the following humorous and poignant reflection on ageing was a joint effort by a local seniors group during a very successful poetry taster workshop facilitated by Chelley McLeer, NBCAI.

OLDER IS....

Realising you'll never be a pop star
Grey hair tingeing the scalp
Selling your concert flute because you
no longer have teeth

When nothing that glitters is gold
Forgetting your girlfriends names
Falling out of love with yourself
Accepting loneliness
The warning bell sounding

BUT OLDER IS.....

Not believing everything the
salesman tells us
Seeing behind the gloss
Rising to the fore
And sinking into flat shoes
Knowing high-heels are corns - in
- waiting!)

Still hoping to win the lottery
Being pampered.....
When dignity seeps into the woodwork.
(By Residents of Fairholme Supported
Housing, Annadale, Spring 2011)

Mental health – raising awareness, reducing the stigma

Tackling mental health problems is a key part of the strategy of many of the statutory and community agencies action plans. Monday 10th October marks World Mental Health Day 2011 and this year there is a big push to raise awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

If your group would like to have a speaker on mental health awareness, you could arrange for a visit from the staff at N.I. Association for Mental Health (Niamh) who can offer outreach and information sessions on a range of topics, such as:

- **Managing stress and anxiety**
- **Dealing with Panic**
- **Living with Loss**

Beacon
Supporting Mental Wellbeing

- **Living with Depression**
- **Positive thinking**
- **Promoting and managing mental wellbeing**
- **And many more**

The team offers accessible services of the highest quality, based on the identified needs of each group and would welcome any questions or if you would like to contact them at -

**Aspen, 16 Finaghy Road South,
Belfast BT10 0DR
aspens@beaconwellbeing.org
(028) 90 611 513**



FORUMS

News & Activities from across the Forums

Belfast East Seniors Forum

In recent weeks the Belfast East Seniors Forum have been networking with other Seniors Forums and organisations which are relevant to the needs of older people living in East Belfast, including Oaklee Housing Association, the District Policing Partnership, FASA etc. There was also a recent visit to the Consumer Council where the forum members were accompanied by a number of isolated older people who were there to find out about issues relating to electricity, gas and other essential services.

Older peoples groups and Forums visited over the past few months have included the Chinese Resource Centre's Hoi Sum seniors group, an older people's group from Gortin, County Tyrone as well as networking events with the Castlereagh, South Belfast, North Belfast, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey and the Greater Shankill seniors Forums..

These networking opportunities were made possible with funding from the Community Foundation for

Northern Ireland who have been of great support to the work of the forum. Members of the Belfast East Seniors Forum also sit on UK wide bodies such as Shaping our Age and the Oaklee Tenants Forum as well as the local AGENI Regional Consultative Forum, The Greater Belfast Seniors Forum, The Age Sector Platform, The Patient Public Involvement Group and numerous other representative bodies.

Belfast East Seniors Forum visit the Consumer Council



A visit to the Chinese Resource Centre

South Belfast Lifestyle Forum

The Forum in South Belfast has also had an active programme in recent months including meeting other seniors Forums and a number of focus groups which have been arranged with agencies such as Age NI, looking at issues such as home support, people's attitudes to sheltered housing etc.

Having completed the CAP funded lobbying and advocacy training, most of the members of South Belfast Lifestyle Forum are skilled in articulating their views and opinions on matters concerning older people and also play an active role in the various campaigns of the Age Sector Platform. Meetings are not all hard work and there are regular treats such as a cookery demonstration with 'Heaven's Kitchen'.

The monthly meetings are a very important way for older people to keep in touch with others and

find out the wide range of physical, cultural and recreational activities going on in and around the area. Any seniors groups throughout South Belfast not currently involved are warmly invited to send representatives along to the meetings to keep in touch with what's on, new comers are always warmly welcomed on the second Tuesday in the month in Donegal Pass Community Centre, Apsley Street.

Tai Chi workshop with master Zhu



Forum members attending the N.I. Pensioners Parliament



ARE YOU AGED 60 OR OVER ? You May Be Missing Out !

Do you know you may be missing out on extra money that you are entitled to?! Do you have health problems which make life difficult? Are you and your partner finding household bills hard to manage ? Even if you own your own home or other properties you may be able to get help! Why not enquire now and check if you are missing out on extra money which could be yours ! Don't Delay – Ring Today!

Call the Benefit Entitlement Unit, Social Security Agency, Lighthouse Building, 1 Cromac Place, Belfast BT7 2JB, 0800 232 1271 Or e-mail : benefit.uptake@nisa.gsi.gov.uk

'Don't Miss Out On Your Full Amount' !

Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum

Community safety for older people was the theme of the conference on 1st September in the Ivanhoe Hotel when 90 people from throughout the Borough gathered to discuss solutions to the fear of crime felt by many older people. Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum invited all of the older people's groups in the Borough to participate in the conference and the response was very positive. Cllr. Tommy Jeffers, the Chairperson of the Castlereagh Community Safety Partnership opened the conference. Forum members were pleased that Cllr. Cecil Hall and Ald. Geraldine Rice, MBE, also attended and took an active part in the discussions.

The conference heard speakers on elder abuse, older people's campaigns on community safety, the response from PSNI and the proposal for a community network from Castlereagh Borough Council.

Dr Marita O'Brien, PhD, presented the conference with the Report, "A Total Indifference to our Dignity" (Older People's Understandings of Elder Abuse). Some of the Forum members had assisted with the research on which this Report is based.

Alison McElhinney from the Age Sector Platform told the conference of issues on which they are campaigning: the cost of living especially heating fuel; community safety; transport; funding for the age sector etc. It was especially welcome to hear from Conor Johnston and Andy McBratney on what the PSNI is doing to protect older people from crime and to reduce the fear of crime.

In the discussions it was clear that policing is an important issue to older people. The delegates were asked to feed back to the members of their club/group with the information presented at the conference.

Participants, Guests & Speakers from the Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum Conference.



NETWORKS

News and activities from across the network

BELFAST STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - improving inequalities in health and well being

Over the past year a broad partnership of community, voluntary and statutory organisations driven by Belfast City Council, the Public Health Agency, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, NI Housing Executive and the Local Commissioning Group has been meeting to tackle the significant inequalities in health in Belfast. These bodies are committed to change through coming together to examine current practice and reallocate resources to make a real difference.

For example - in disadvantaged areas of Belfast compared to affluent areas

- **Life expectancy is 5 years less**
- **Alcohol related deaths are double**
- **20% of the population do not take any exercise**

- **Suicide rates are double**
- **Men from the travelling community live on average 15 years less and women 11 years less**

The Belfast Strategic Partnership is developing an action plan which will spell out how these health priorities will be addressed, and who will be responsible. The plan will be administered by the Belfast Health Development Unit based at Lanyon Key in Belfast City Centre.

There are 5 representatives from the community sector on the partnership including Margy Washbrook, manager of Engage With Age, who is there to ensure older people's voices are heard in any future decisions. Greater Belfast Senior's Forum was represented by Chair, Mary Morrison, at a workshop held at Belfast Castle in June to prioritise areas of concern, from ante natal care to isolation among older people.

Translink 'Travel Tips For Seniors' leaflet launched !

Members of the various Forums from South & East Belfast & Castlereagh were present at the launch of a new leaflet 'Travel tips For Seniors' produced by Translink recently.

Following a major conference 'Moving Experiences' which took place earlier this year at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Cultra, matters raised by those attending have been incorporated into the leaflet which gives advice on making the journey an enjoyable one when travelling by bus or train. Some seniors Forum members agreed to pose for photographs with Translink staff at the launch in the style of 'singing in the rain' !!



Senior Forum members check out the new Metro bus routes



Discussing the travel tips for Senior

'Travelling on' - a new recording reminiscence project



Engage With Age has been granted funding from Arts Council NI and Translink to develop a project with older people based around travel and transport memories and experiences. Travelling on will recruit older people from different parts of Belfast to take part in a group which will meet a number of times with the author & broadcaster Malachy O'Doherty of Channel 56 to capture and record memories of journeys and how people travelled in the past and the present.

Older people have often commented that public transport systems, particularly buses, do not provide them with the safe and flexible means of transport they need to be able to travel about Belfast with confidence. We have heard many stories of older people falling as the bus moves off before they have safely taken their seat, or of being unable to step into the bus because the driver cannot or won't lower or "kneel" the bus to allow people to get in. Other problems are buses not being able to stop at the kerb due to motorists parking at bus stops, and drivers not allowing enough time for older people to get on and off.

Through learning how to use video recording equipment and recording their experiences on film, older people, working with Translink, will produce a DVD which will be used as a training tool for bus drivers. The DVD will focus on making bus drivers aware of the importance of public transport to older people and how the standard of customer care is a crucial part of either encouraging them to use it or discouraging them and their friends from ever using it.

If you are interested in taking part in this project which will begin in the Autumn, please contact Theresa McVeigh at Engage With Age **02890 649649**.

Rights 4 Seniors - New website launched



A massive social justice project created by Advice NI and funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, Rights4Seniors is your on-line guide for later life. It is a vital rights reference for older people in Northern Ireland as well as those who work with or care for them. **www.rights4seniors.net**



PREPARING FOR WINTER

TIPS FOR OLDER PEOPLE



There's no doubt that the cold winter weather can be a worry for those in later life. But with a little preparation, and by following some simple suggestions, it's possible to stay healthy, safe and as comfortable as possible this winter. Here's a list of things you can do to help ward off the winter chills:

- Have your heating system serviced and chimney swept.
- Make sure you claim all the financial support you can to help with heating bills.
- If you have wood-burning, coal or gas heaters make sure you have adequate ventilation.
- Check your water stopcock is working properly.
- Make sure your smoke alarm is working.
- Be sure you have some warm shoes or boots with non-slip soles.
- Keep a mixture of salt and sand handy to put on steps or paths in icy weather.
- Keep simple cold, flu and sore throat remedies in the house.

Your pharmacist can make suggestions and can also advise on how to manage minor illnesses

- Order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time, particularly if bad weather is forecast.
- Keep basic food items in the cupboard or freezer in case it's too cold to go shopping.

Staying healthy

Cold weather means the beginning of the flu season and can cause particular difficulties if you have breathing and circulation problems. To help you stay well, it's important to keep warm at home and outdoors, follow as healthy a lifestyle as you can and have a flu jab.

Keep moving

Keeping active generates heat and helps to keep you warm. It's good for general fitness and wellbeing too. So when you're indoors, try not to sit still for more than an hour. Chair-based exercises and simply moving your arms and legs and wiggling your toes are helpful if walking is difficult.

Eat well

Hot meals and drinks help keep you warm, so eat at least one hot meal and have hot drinks during the day. Include a good range of foods in your diet and aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day so that you're getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins. Remember that frozen vegetables are as good as fresh.

Keep your spirits up

It's not unusual to feel a bit down in winter – particularly when the days are short and it gets dark by 4pm. Try to keep to your usual routines and, if you can't visit friends, make sure you phone them regularly for a chat. It helps to do something you enjoy every day. If you feel down for several weeks and it's stopping you going out, making you feel listless and lacking in energy, it's very important to share these feelings with someone, perhaps a friend or your GP.

Keep warm indoors and out

Several thin layers of clothing will keep you warmer than one thick layer, as the layers trap warm air. If you are sitting down, a shawl or blanket will provide a lot of warmth. Use a hot-water bottle or an electric blanket to warm the bed, but never use the two together. Check whether your electric blanket can be kept on all night or whether it is only designed to warm the bed before you get in and make sure you get it checked every three years.

Heating your home

Heating your home is easier and cheaper if it is well insulated and your central heating works properly. Have your heating system serviced each year and check that it's working before the cold weather starts. Gas heating must be serviced by a Gas Safety Registered engineer. Draught-proof doors and windows, insulate the loft and lag the hot-water tank and pipes. The Energy Saving Trust can advise you whether or not you may be able to get financial help to do this – call **0800 512 012**. Grants from the government and energy suppliers to help heat and insulate your home may be available if you are over 60.

Contact your energy supplier if you are having trouble paying your bills. Companies should not disconnect all-pensioner households during winter months. Also ask about their Priority Service Register for older and disabled people, and if you are eligible for free energy efficiency and insulation. People over Pension Credit age are entitled to the Winter Fuel Payment to help with heating costs. If you have not been eligible before, contact the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline **0845 9 15 15 15** for more information.

If you receive Pension Credit or certain other benefits, you are automatically paid an extra cold weather payment when the temperature is at freezing or below for seven days in a row. To find out if you are receiving the benefits you are entitled to, call Age NI on freephone **0808 808 7575** from 8.00am to 7.00pm.

FACE
HAS THEIR FACE FALLEN ON ONE SIDE?
CAN THEY SMILE?

A RMS
CAN THEY RAISE BOTH ARMS AND
KEEP THEM THERE?

S PEECH
IS THEIR SPEECH SLURRED?

TIME TO CALL 999
IF YOU SEE ANY SINGLE
ONE OF THESE SIGNS

WHEN STROKE STRIKES, ACT F.A.S.T.
nhs.uk/actfast

Public Health Agency DHSSPS



ACT F.A.S.T! REDUCE THE RISK OF STROKE!

body, together with communication difficulties (slurred or lost speech) and cognitive problems (inability to read, for example).

Speedy treatment depends on friends or relatives recognising that someone is having a stroke and the Public Health Agency has launched the FAST campaign – an initiative supported by NI Chest Heart & Stroke designed to draw attention to the symptoms of the condition and to the need to act quickly when they occur.

Transient ischaemic attack (TIA) or 'mini-stroke' has similar signs to a stroke but gets better within 24 hours. It could however be a warning sign and needs to be treated as an emergency, if you think you have had a TIA in the past consult your GP urgently!

Why we need to Act F.A.S.T. !!

Do you know how to recognise the possible symptoms of a stroke? Spotting a stroke early can be the key to recovery and it needs to be treated urgently, in the same way as a heart attack. That's why every second counts. Reaching hospital in time can sometimes mean the difference between permanent brain damage and a full or partial recovery.

When a stroke occurs, the blood supply to the brain is interrupted. This can be caused by a clot or by a rupture in one of the blood vessels. The result is that the brain is starved of its oxygen supply and a section of it dies. In an attempt to limit the damage, the body's own defence mechanisms create scarring around the site, which can create further problems. Depending on the area of the damage, stroke can cause paralysis down the right or left side of the

Reducing your risk of stroke !

Some people are more at risk of having a stroke if they have certain other medical conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat) and diabetes. Also significant lifestyle factors may also significantly increase the risk of having a stroke including :

- Smoking
- Being overweight
- Lack of exercise
- Poor diet
- Exceeding the recommended daily alcohol limit

Leading a healthy, active lifestyle is vital to help reduce your risk of having a stroke. If you would like further information, N.I. Chest Heart & Stroke have a range of leaflets available, Tel: **028 9032 0184**, Helpline: **08457 697 299** or can be downloaded from their website www.nichs.org.uk.

