



**Annual Report**  
Engage with Age  
April 2019-March 2020





# Structure, Governance and Management

## Background to Engage with Age:

Engage with Age (EwA) was established as a charity and a company limited by guarantee in November 2000. EwA is a community development organisation with the vision of older people in Belfast living their lives to their full potential.

Engage with Age's mission is to work with others creating opportunities for older people to become and stay connected, enjoy life and influence the future of their communities.

Engage with Age seeks to enable sustainable benefits for older people and the community. It operates multi-agency partnerships to ensure joined-up and collaborative working. Partnerships are active from a governance level down to operational and daily activities.

## Governance and Management:

Engage with Age is governed by a Board of Trustees that meets quarterly. Trustees come from a range of older people's and community organisations, older people's forums, as well as the business and public sector. The Board is supported by a Finance and Operations Sub-Group that meets six times per year, in advance of board meetings, and considers finance, HR and other related matters.

The management of Engage with Age formally reports to the Board and the Finance and Operations Committee, and is delegated responsibility for delivering the company's programme of work at an operational level. The staff team is composed of a Director, Operations Manager and Development Officers that deliver the company's programmes. Engage with Age has sub-contracted the Third Sector Finance company to undertake its finance administration.



*The Engage with Age Annual General Meeting, November 2019*

# Aims and Objectives

As described in the Articles and Memorandum of Association, Engage with Age is established to work in partnership with organisations which promote the health and wellbeing, interests and alleviate loneliness, isolation and exclusion of older people. Engage with Age does this without distinction of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, caring responsibilities, race, or political, religious or other opinions. Engage with Age fosters partnerships between older people, local authorities, public agencies and voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to relieve poverty, preserve and protect health, advance education with the object of improving the conditions of life for older people. Engage with Age benefits older people from the age of 55 years of age and older, and makes its support available to as diverse and as wide a range of older people as possible.

## Values:

Our Values guide us in our work and our relationships. They guide our behaviour, our attitudes, the decisions we make and what we expect from one another. Engage with Age values are based on community development principles. We put older people at the centre of all that we do, believing in self-determination and the right to make their own choices.

We do this by:

- Enabling and supporting older people to take part in decision making.
- Respecting differences and embracing diversity.
- Being person focused.
- Working with energy and encouraging fun and enjoyment.
- Promoting positive messages about age and older people.
- Being empowering, challenging inequalities, promoting fairness and social justice.

We are committed to working in partnership, believing in the strength of the contribution of many agencies, people and volunteers to make a real difference.

We do this by:

- Building strong and enduring relationships.
- Being open and honest.
- Valuing and respecting all contributions.
- Exercising mutual respect.
- Sharing and learning from each other.
- Being creative, innovative and embracing change.

## Strategic Planning:

Engage with Age is implementing a strategic plan covering the period of April 2017 – March 2020 which reflects the above vision and mission, the methods of working and the objectives of the company.

## Strategic Aims:

The 2017-2020 Strategic Plan has the following Strategic Aims:

**Objective 1:** To engage older people to address the impact of loneliness and/or isolation.

**Objective 2:** To engage older people to improve physical and mental health.

**Objective 3:** To engage the communities of older people so they are stronger.

**Objective 4:** To engage the voice of older people so it is heard.

Across the whole organisation is a cross-cutting objective of developing a strong and sustainable organisation.



*Strategic Planning Day*

# Achievements and Performance

## Activities for the year April 2019 – March 2020:

### **Objective One:** Addressing the impact of loneliness and/ or isolation.

The year started with an evaluation of the first year of the PAL Project (People Addressing Loneliness). The key aims of older people developing improved social connections, health and wellbeing, and increased control over their social lives were continually achieved. Every outcome exceeded the number of older people positively reflecting improvements in their lives with typical comments from focus groups including: "I've made new friendships and met people outside of the project and activities" and "she [an older woman] has met new friends and found a support network outside of the family."

In May 2019 Engage with Age undertook a media campaign to raise awareness of loneliness and recruit new participants. Significant coverage was received in local papers with full pages in the Daily Mirror, Irish News, Newsletter, and coverage on BBC Radio Ulster's John Toal programme and BBC Radio 4's "The Listening Project". Referral numbers increased. A range of techniques were used to recruit new participants including social events and health sector promotion. "The Slipped Disco", a night out for older people, continued to attract people experiencing loneliness, and from this activity participants became engaged in other regular groups. Regular activities such as the "Keeping In Touch Group" and the Belle

Bashford Court Games Group continued to grow and become sustainable. A new dance group was established which featured on Comic Relief's Red Nose Day television broadcast on BBC 1. Engage with Age promoted learning from its research and evaluations with the City-Wide Group on Isolation and Loneliness, and the Campaign to End Loneliness conference in September 2019. As the reporting period drew to a close activities were rapidly curtailed due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The PAL Project adjusted to telephone and online support. Before the end of the year the PAL Gazette, Engage with Age's new newspaper responding to lockdown and aiming to connect with for older people who aren't online, was issued for the first time reaching 2,000 people. A further programme of telephone support was started.

In this period there were 202 activities with 3,022 interventions, representing a 60% increase in activities and 200% increase in interventions in comparison to the previous year. Of approximately 200 referrals received between May 2018 and March 2020, half wanted one to one befriending. This highlights an area of need for Engage with Age to address in the future.



*The PAL Project Steering Committee.*



*Dessert time at PAL Project barbeque.*





*Top left - iPad Training.*



*Top right - Members of the Friday Afternoon Bowling Group.*

*Bottom left - Participants enjoy a game of Boccia.*



## **Objective Two: Engaging older people to improve physical and mental health.**

Engage with Age is supported by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency to deliver health improvement programmes in East and South Belfast. All programmes were delivered with targets exceeded. Features of the year's activities included: a "Digital Skills" training programme for older people delivered by volunteers from A and I Goodbody Solicitors; an intergenerational programme between older and younger people at St. John Vianny Community Centre; mental health programmes including a "What About You" event in East Belfast. New developments this year included games activities with older people with sight and other sensory disabilities, renewed partnerships with supported housing centres such as Dean Crookes Fold, and Falls Prevention workshops that benefitted 50 people and generated 18 new referrals for foot-care specialists. A partnership was established with the Park Avenue Hotel which drew significant numbers for day long activities.

Physical activity work included a growing number and diverse range of older people engaging in ten pin bowling. These included older people living with disabilities, who have experienced loneliness, older people living with dementia, and people with restricted mobility including one person who has a limb amputated.

When the Covid-19 Pandemic began a key focus of activities was reinforcement of health and safety messages, with telephone, online, and mail-outs by staff reinforcing safety within lockdown. In spite of lockdown, the Words Alive creative writing group supported by Engage with Age launched its latest exhibition of photographs and prose online, reaching over 500 people in less than a week.

In this period there were 378 activities with 6,201 interventions, an increase of 10% in activities and interventions in comparison with the previous year.



*Top left - Group learns crafting skills.*



*Top right - Forums Day at Belfast City Hall.*



*Bottom left - Carousel Training for Groups.*

### **Objective Three: Engaging the communities of older people so they are stronger.**

Work with the South and East Belfast Older People's Forums continued consistently throughout the year. The forums undertook a mix of information sharing regarding opportunities for older people, discussions with decision makers such as Queen's University and Police Service of Northern Ireland, and health improvement activities. Training and development days were held, and this year the East and South Forums shared social activities including their Christmas outing. The Greater Belfast Seniors' Forum (G6) was supported throughout the year, via funding from Belfast City Council. It undertook a work plan promoting the need for improved services for older people to access transport, health and mental health services, and address fuel poverty. The G6 ran a successful mental health campaign, supported by Volunteer Now, and met with transport officials to raise awareness of the needs older people have in accessing public transport. A partnership with Wicklow County Council's Older People's Forum continued, and in February 2020 the G6 met to plan its activities for 2020-2021.

A capacity building programme continued throughout the year with significant numbers of workshops on how to run groups, how to programme group activity, and individual craft skills sessions. A new "carousel" style programme was developed, bringing together significant numbers of group representatives to learn a number of skills in one day. Particular successes include the creation of an East Belfast "Connect" group bringing together 60 men from a number of groups across the area.

A major recruitment event for the Older People's Forums due to take place in Belfast City Hall at the end of March 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Towards the end of the March 2020 priorities in supporting the forums included ensuring as many forum members as possible could access group meetings via online video conferencing.

Over this year there were 59 Forum Meetings, with 966 attendances, and 52 training sessions benefitting 1,026 people. This is consistent with the previous year's activity.



## **Objective Four: Engaging the voice of older people so it is heard.**

The South and East Belfast Older Peoples Forums continued to raise awareness of the needs of older people, and this included meetings with transport providers regarding the Glider Service, PSNI and Consumer Council. Engage with Age's Consultation Group was active with promoting the needs of older people with Northern Ireland Housing Executive, CLARE Project, BBC Licencing, and Dementia Friendly Communities. Engage with Age continued its role co-Chairing the Dementia Friendly East Belfast campaign and activities included co-ordinating the Interactive RADAR Centre training for over 230 people,

and publishing the monthly "What's On" guide which reached over 2,000 people per month. Social media work resulted in an increase in social media followers bringing the main Facebook pages managed to over 1,000 followers each. Significant media work included television coverage on BBC Northern Ireland's main new programme Newsline for Dementia Friendly East Belfast, double page spreads in the Belfast Telegraph newspaper and its online sites, and interviews and features on Northern Ireland's two biggest radio programmes, BBC Radio Ulster's Good Morning Ulster and Talk Back.



*Top left - Members of G6 attend IMTACT Transport Meeting.*



*Top right - Celebration of Dementia Friendly East Belfast campaign.*

*Bottom left - Art and Dementia Training in East Belfast.*





## Cross-cutting objective: Developing the organisation.

In this reporting period, Engage with Age worked in partnership with a range of agencies including Age Friendly Belfast, Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership, City-Wide Group on Isolation and Loneliness, South Belfast Health Forum, City-wide Dementia Friendly Communities, Belfast Local Commissioning Group, and the Campaign to End Loneliness. Engage with Age raised additional funds from the Public Health Agency to improve marketing support and resources, and support the Dementia Friendly East Belfast Campaign. Two new trustees joined the board of Engage with Age. In February 2020, having delivered the previous organisational strategy, Engage with Age initiated the process of developing a new Strategic Plan 2020-2023.

Overall, Engage with Age delivered 691 activities in 2019-20 (18% increase on last year), representing 11,215 interventions (27% increase on last year), compared to 583 activities with 8,825 interventions in the previous year.

It was a busy and successful year for Engage with Age, with lots of initiatives that will be further developed in the period to be covered by the next Strategic Plan. As the 2019-2020 year ended the Covid-19 Pandemic had just started and our communities went in to "lockdown". It would be inappropriate to conclude this annual report without referencing this major change in the circumstances within which Engage with Age undertakes its work.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has significant impacts on how Engage with Age enables older people to live happier, healthier and more connected lives. It also offers opportunities for creativity alongside the need to develop resilience. Our changed circumstances and the creative resilience that the new circumstances demand will be explored and developed throughout the forthcoming years.



***The start of the Covid-19 Pandemic affected some events, though Engage with Age successfully "pivoted" services to successfully continue its core work.***





Top left - **Carers Group.**

Top right - **Christmas Party.**

Middle - **DFEB What's On Guide.**

Bottom - **Launch of TESA DRI Research.**







## Engage with Age Board of Trustees

Linda Armitage, to November 2019  
Anne Greenan  
Jonathan Hegan  
Gillian McEvoy  
Linda Moody, to August 2019  
Nick Menhinick  
Tony Barclay  
Leigh Greer  
Robert Hagan  
Sinead Hyndman  
Ivan Baxter, from November 2019  
Francis Hughes, from November 2019

## Staff

Eamon Quinn, Director  
Grace Henry, Operations Manager  
Laurence Wright, Development Officer  
John McCandless, Development Officer  
Cathy Chambers, Development Officer  
Martin Towers, Development Officer

## Contractors

Third Sector Finance, Finance Management  
MayWe, Social Media Management



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