



Annual Report

Engage with Age
April 2018-March 2019



Engage with Age participating at Age Friendly Belfast's Be Prepared event.

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 a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. It 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.



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.

Achievements and Performance

Activities for the year April 2018 – March 2019:

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

Engage with Age initiated its new PAL (People Addressing Loneliness) Project in April 2018, courtesy of funding from Comic Relief. The PAL Project benefitted from learning from the previous HOPE programme, and aims to reduce the impact of isolation and loneliness experienced by older people by establishing sustainable groups run by older people themselves. A new Development Officer was recruited and a steering committee of ten older people was formed. Groups were established to cater for the interests of the participants, and by March 2019 they included: a group for older people seeking to use their smart phones called the Keep In Touch Group (KIT Group); a games group in Belle Bashford

Court; a creative writing group; and a weekly T'ai Chi Group lead by an 80 year old instructor. Regular excursions and celebration events took place to recruit new participants, including the popular "Slipped Disco" event. All of these groups are growing in sustainability in order to continue their activity after the grant has finished. All of the participants to this programme are new to Engage with Age. There are 62 people engaging on a weekly basis, plus a further 100 people engaging periodically.

In this period there were 125 activities with 1,063 interventions, representing a significantly increased volume of activity in comparison to the previous year.



Top Left - The Slipped Disco.

Top right - Keen dancers Donal and Gloria.

Bottom left - Friday morning T'ai Chi.



Top left - The 'Words Alive' creative writing group.

Top right - Bowling at Dundonald Ice Bowl.

Bottom left - iPad training in the Engage with Age office.

Bottom right - Falls Prevention work with the Public Health Agency.

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

Engage with Age's Public Health Agency (PHA) funded programme in South Belfast, and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) funded programme in East Belfast have had significant successes in promoting good physical and mental health. Nutrition programmes were reviewed and refreshed. In addition to the "Eat Well Bingo" education programme, a "Grow It Cook It" programme started in Belvoir Health Hub. A successful inter-generational project took place at St. John Vianney Community Centre, with younger and older people learning from each other and sharing the centre. Technology programmes included

iPad training of older people with volunteers from A&L Goodbody Solicitors. Networking in East Belfast has grown significantly through a new partnership with the Park Avenue Hotel, offering larger scale events for older people's groups. All of the targets for PHA and BHSCT programmes have been exceeded, in particular physical activity, mental health, and life-long learning activities.

In this period there were 338 activities with 5,601 interventions, an increase in activity from the previous year.



Top left - Representatives from the West and South Belfast Forums meet to plan collaborations.

Top right - Fundraising training for older people's groups.

Bottom left - Capacity Building Training at the East Belfast Network Centre.

Bottom right - Outing to Crumlin Road Gaol.

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

The Belfast East Seniors Forum and the South Belfast Lifestyle Forum continue to be supported and have experienced significant growth. The Belfast East Forum recruited new members in order to ensure good ongoing attendance and operation. Attendance at the South Belfast Forum increased this year and benefitted from scheduling full forum and forum committee meetings on the same day. Both forums had successful planning days, and this year South Belfast opted for a "South Belfast Has Talent" event to recruit new members. Throughout the year the forums met with agencies such as PSNI, the Justice Department and the Fire and Rescue Service, and participated in studies such as work with optometrists and the Wellcome Trust, among others. The Greater Belfast Seniors Forum (G6) successfully reviewed its Action Plan, focusing on practical representation of the needs of older people across Belfast on the issues of transport, access to health services, fuel poverty, and mental health. As well as meetings with service providers, G6 initiated a

significant mental health awareness programme, and surveyed and fed back to the management of the new Glider bus service. Representatives from G6 attended the National Convening of Older People's Councils in Wicklow, with a return exchange visit taking place in Belfast in March 2019.

In addition to forum support, there has been an increase in capacity building training to older people's groups in Belfast. Training has covered how to run a group, programming ideas, fundraising, and how to run successful meetings. In a change to previous years, Engage with Age has visited groups and used Community Centres to bring together a number of groups at one time.

Over this year there were 69 Forum Meetings, with 1,026 attendances, a significant increase on the previous year. In addition, this year there were 51 training sessions benefitting 1,135 people, compared to 35 sessions for 705 people in 2017/18.

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

In June 2018, Engage with Age released "It's The People You Meet"; a study into how to address isolation and loneliness. The study was undertaken in partnership with Queen's University of Belfast School of Social Work and Social Sciences. Following a launch to 100 sector professionals and older people, the study has been promoted to the World Healthy Cities conference, Age Friendly Convention in Belfast, the Royal College of GPs, and a North/South conference of Civil Servants.

In March 2019 the Ulster University TESA DRI Study, produced in partnership with Engage with Age, was launched. The study into technology used by people living with dementia has yielded two academic papers with a further four papers being released in the new year. This study generated an art exhibition of work produced by people living with dementia which was exhibited to an overall audience of 10,000

people, and also yielded a guide for artists working with people living with dementia, as well as artist training.

Engage with Age has continued to take a leading role in the Dementia Friendly East Belfast campaign, co-ordinating interactive training sessions at Belfast's RADAR Centre, information stands, and circulating information. In response to requests for consultations, Engage with Age formed a consultations group of older people, new to Engage with Age, who consulted with the NI Housing Executive, CLARE Project, BBC Licence Fee, and Commissioner for Older People. Engage with Age has continued to work in partnership with a wide range of organisations such as Age Partnership Belfast, Health Ageing Strategic Partnership, the City-wide Group on Isolation and Loneliness, and many others.

Top left - Launch of 'It's The People You Meet' in June 2018.

Top right - Art work produced by the TESA DRI research programme.

Bottom left - The Dementia Friendly East Belfast campaign.

Bottom middle - Greater Belfast Seniors' Forum members test Belfast's new Glider bus service.

Bottom right - Greater Belfast Seniors' Forum members interviewed for UYV's 'The View from Stormont'.



Cross-cutting objective: Developing the organisation.

Engage with Age has maintained and developed its support from the Public Health Agency (PHA), Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT), Belfast City Council, and other funders. The organisation again raised additional funds from the PHA to increase promotion and to support Dementia Friendly East Belfast. Engage with Age benefitted from the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action/ East Belfast Community Development Agency Capacity Building Programme. Workshops took place on monitoring and evaluation, networking, and staff members individually took part in personal development, media

training, mentoring, and ILM Leadership courses. Engage with Age participated in a Governance Review and recruited four new trustees. A programme of reviewing all company policies was commenced which will be completed in the new year.

Overall, Engage with Age delivered 583 activities in 2018-19, representing 8,825 interventions, compared to 465 activities with 6,969 interventions in the previous year. It has been a busy and successful year for Engage with Age, with lots of initiatives that will be further developed in the 2019-2020 year.



Top - **Dementia Friendly East Belfast planning workshop.**

Bottom - **Staff participating in the 'Beat The Street' walking initiative.**



Engaging with PAL project has given me a new lease of life

Kate, 86, tells how group helped her combat loneliness



BY SHEENA McSTRAVICK

WHEN Kate Roddy contracted pneumonia two years ago she completely lost all confidence in herself and refused to leave the house.

Struggling to get out of bed each day, the 86-year-old had resigned herself to a life of loneliness, despite having a supportive family network around her.

Noticing that her mother needed to interact with people of a similar age and life experience as herself, Kate's daughter got in touch with the People Addressing Loneliness project to help her mum get her life back.

PAL is a Belfast-based initiative from charity Engage With Age to help reintroduce older people who feel lonely and isolate back into the community.

A recent study from Belfast City Council revealed 25% of those aged over 75 who live alone do not speak to someone every day.

Kate explained: "I didn't really feel like joining any classes or making a commitment to any but they suggested the cinema group and it was the perfect start as it was very gentle thing to help ease me back in."

"My father was director of a cinema and I had always gone right from I was five years old so the cinema is a delight for me but I didn't have anyone to go to the cinema with. I have no car and no transport and I just had no one to go with so the cinema group trip was perfect."

COURAGE

After finding the courage to once again leave her home and go out into the world, the Dundonald woman said the project has "brought her back to life" and she's now an active participant in many of the group's classes including tai chi.

The retired teacher told the Mirror: "I've wanted to do tai chi for years and I was delighted when I heard the group offered a class. I have arthritis and the class is specifically geared towards people with arthritis and it is just my joy, my total and absolute joy to attend."

Kate is urging others who find themselves in the same position she did to join their local group because "life doesn't stop after retirement". She added: "I would say to them just open the door and go out, people will meet you with open arms and everyone is in the same position as yourself. When you get out you don't act like the way you do at home, you definitely become alive."

Speaking about the rise in loneliness, Eamonn Quinn from Engage With Age charity said: "The proportion of people who are reporting they are experiencing it is increasing but the problem lots of people face is that they are too afraid to even admit they're lonely as there is a stigma attached to it."

The project is hosting a special Slipped Disco for older people at the Black Box next Monday with music from DJ Groover and all are welcome.

Eamonn added: "It can sometimes be difficult to make the first step, but if you, or your parents, would like to join in and have fun, give us a call on 028 9073 5696 or email martin.towers@engagewithage.org.uk."

Engage with Age

It's Red Nose day on Friday 15th March, and here is how Comic Relief has been supporting Engage with Age



'Slipped Disco' is a social dance event run by Engage with Age, a Comic Relief funded project. The charity runs a free disco for older people living in and around Belfast, helping to battle against loneliness among older people and promote health and wellbeing.

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Belfast disco event for older people aims to help combat loneliness and isolation

The 'Slipped Disco' event is hosted by Engage with Age charity who

3467 SHARES By Sheena McStravick

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Engage with Age Christmas Afternoon Tea 2018.

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For further information contact:

Engage with Age

East Belfast Network Centre
55 Templemore Avenue
Belfast BT5 4FP

Telephone: **028 9073 5696**

Email: **info@engagewithage.org.uk**

Website: **www.engagewithage.org.uk**

Facebook: **www.facebook.com/EngageWithAgeBelfast**

Twitter: **[@Engage_With_Age](https://twitter.com/Engage_With_Age)**