



## STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-26



*Tea Dance at St. Simon's Community Hub, South Belfast, March 2023*

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# Introduction

By mid-2045, almost 1 in 4 people in Northern Ireland are projected to be aged 65 and over (*NISRA, 2022*). Older people are increasingly engaging in civil life through volunteering, socializing and political engagement.

Engage with Age's previous strategy (2020 – 23) built upon a strong foundation, based on 20 years of experience of inspiring, encouraging and supporting older people. Our strategy was based upon the highly valued input and experience not only of our dedicated staff and Trustees, but also our service users, volunteers and partners. Together, we developed a strong strategy that would enhance and improve the lives of older people across Belfast. However, no-one could have foreseen the extreme challenges that the world would face in the same period, brought about by the Covid19 pandemic. The pandemic brought the world to a stop, made us revisit and amend our services and how we could best support older people, particularly considering how best to deliver services that were predominantly face to face.

It is notable and commendable that our staff and volunteers jointly ensured continued provision of services beyond any expectation during the extremely challenging lockdowns and other restrictions we endured. The use of technology such as Zoom video conferencing ensured we were able to deliver programmes directly to people in their own homes, especially advice and support related to Covid19 such as healthy eating, signposting and updates on latest restrictions and official advice, as well as some of the activities we would normally meet face to face to enjoy.

Our new PAL telephone befriending service would prove to be of particular importance as the Covid19 pandemic took hold, and continues to be well subscribed. That service could not be delivered without the invaluable support of our volunteer telephone befrienders, led by our resident project lead. As well as the telephone befriending service, we were able to introduce seventeen new

activities during the Covid19 period, including our artist in residence, who supported a number of people to produce some excellent art.

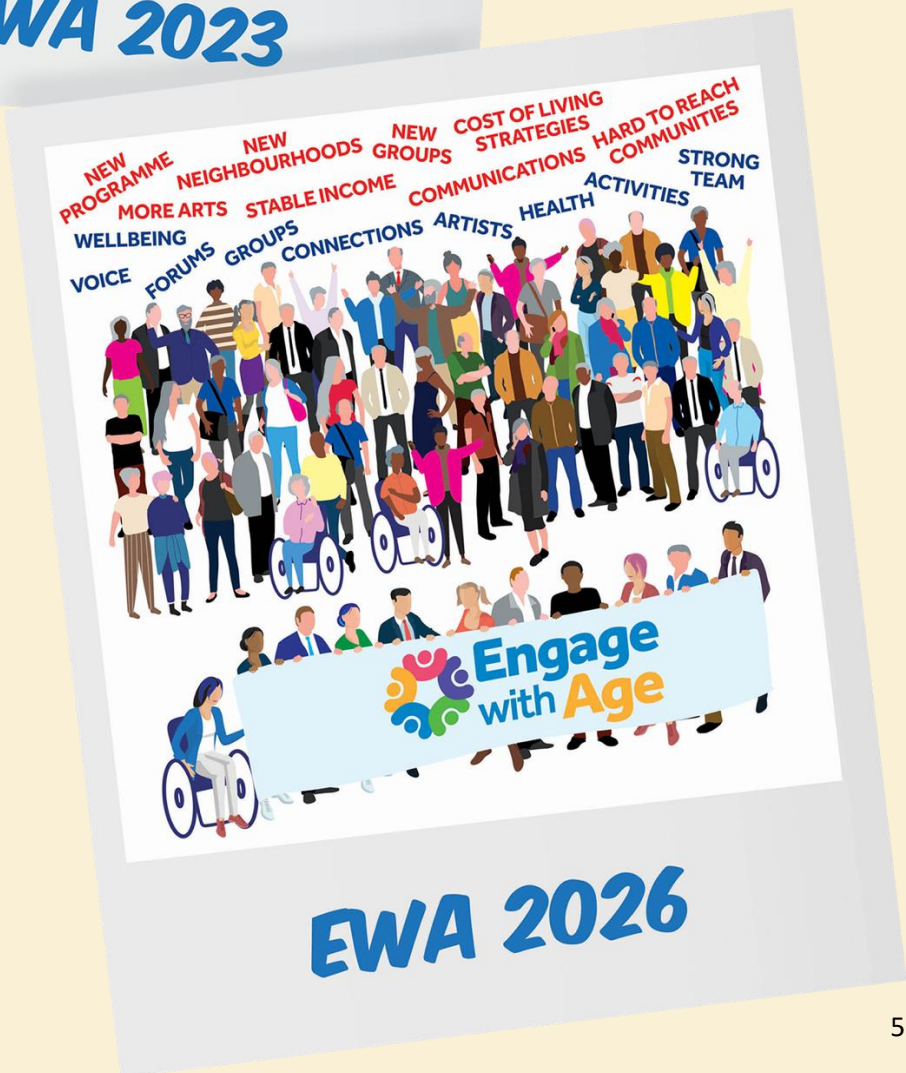
The very unusual circumstances associated with the pandemic encouraged us to utilize our social media and other media representation in different ways. This in turn has helped us to identify how and where we might better use media to reach out to older people across Belfast, to further identify, develop and provide the services people want and need.

The next three years will, hopefully, be less challenging for all of us. As we continue to resume some form of normality, we also discover many changes within society. We will strive to continue to improve the quality of life for older people across an increasingly culturally diverse city by empowering older people to live happy, healthy, independent, and connected lives. Older people have a right to be heard, to be listened to, and to effectively shape decisions, fully participate in society and deserve our respect. Engage with Age will continue to support those experiencing loneliness and isolation, and encourage older people to participate fully in the events and activities that they enjoy. We will endeavour to the very best of our ability to ensure we have appropriate resources and funding to ensure we are able to deliver for our service users, and we will support groups to become self-sustaining in their own right. As the organization develops, we will continue to recruit the right people to deliver our services, whilst ensuring our staff and volunteers are fully appreciated and receive the very best support.

I am grateful for the collaborative process that we have used to develop this Strategic Plan and thank everyone involved - the Board, Staff, participants and older people, as well as external agency Ruth Flood Associates - for all their enthusiasm and hard work. 2023 heralds new beginnings for us all. There are exciting times ahead, and we very much look forward to them.

**Tony Barclay MBE, Chairperson, Engage with Age**

# Engage with Age 2023 to 2026



# Mission, vision and values

## Mission

To empower older people to live happy, healthy, independent, and connected lives.

## Vision

All older people are respected, valued, included and listened to in society, and actively involved in shaping the world.

## Values

### *Older people-led*

- Our work will be driven by the needs, rights and ambitions of older people, including those who are marginalised/under-represented, with older people taking the lead in our work.

### *Empowerment*

- Our work will support the rights of older people to shape decisions, to work to build stronger communities, to contribute to society, to have their voices listened to, and to advocate for their needs.

### *Respect*

- We believe that every person is of equal value within society and has a right to be treated with dignity and respect. We will live out this value in our work including making any reasonable adjustments needed.

### *Partnership*

- We will expand the reach and impact of our activities by working closely with other organisations, groups and partners in the best interests of older people.

### *Fun*

- Everyone has the right to take part in stimulating activities and have fun.

# Strategic Aims for 2023-26



1. To empower older people to reduce the impact of loneliness and isolation on peer individuals within their communities and neighbourhoods.



2. To empower older people to improve their own health and wellbeing.



3. To strengthen communities and neighbourhoods by supporting and empowering older people's groups and forums.



4. To empower older people so they can shape matters that affect their lives.

## Supporting aim

To develop Engage with Age as an organisation so it is capable of delivering its strategic aims 2023-26.

# Strategic Aim 1

To empower older people to reduce the impact of isolation and loneliness on peer individuals within their communities and neighbourhoods.

## Outcome

Older people create increased social connections and reduce loneliness within their neighbourhoods.

## Priorities for 2023-26

- Improve and increase ways of identifying lonely and/ or isolated older people including the most isolated older people.
- Empower volunteer older people to lead and run activity groups and deliver befriending support to reduce loneliness and isolation amongst their peers.
- Engage isolated older people to take part in activity groups and befriending.
- Develop and increase the services for lonely and/ or isolated older people.
- Increase engagement with under-represented groups and marginalised communities.
- Collaborate with partners and agencies to increase the impact of our work to reduce loneliness and/ or isolation.



# Strategic Aim 2

To empower older people to improve their own health and wellbeing.

## Outcome

Older people have improved health and wellbeing.

## Priorities for 2023-26

- Deliver a portfolio of activities that promoted older peoples improved physical and mental health, better skills and knowledge, and enhanced wellbeing.
- Review and expand our programmes introducing new services.
- Work in partnership with others to deliver and signpost to support that counteracts the rising cost of living.
- Review and expand our informational and promotional services.

# Strategic Aim 3

To strengthen communities and neighbourhoods by supporting and empowering older people's groups and forums.

## Outcome

Groups and forums are sustainable, strong, and actively engaged with their communities and neighbourhoods.

## Priorities for 2023-26:

- Increase the sustainability and effectiveness of older people's groups and forums consolidating the learning and developments since the Covid-19 pandemic and enabling post Covid recovery.
- Establish more older people's groups, as well as signposting older people into existing groups.
- Target support to groups that need support most.
- Support the development and strengthening of networks of older people's groups and forums.
- Enable the development of relationships between older people's groups and stakeholders such as public agencies and organisations that take decisions that affect older people.

# Strategic Aim 4

To empower older people so they can shape matters that affect their lives.

## Outcome

Older people feel they have been listened to and have shaped decisions that affect them.

## Priorities for 2023-26

- Work in partnership with other organizations to lobby on key issues that affect older people appropriate to where we operate.
- Agree key issues that affect older people and empower older people to lobby for attention to address them.
- Deliver a programme of engagement between older people and influencers and decision makers.
- Consolidate Engage with Age's communications to improve awareness of the role and needs of older people.
- Produce and utilize research on the lived experience of older people.

# Supporting aim

To develop Engage with Age so it is capable of delivering its strategic aims 2023-26.

## Supporting value

*We will work efficiently and with integrity*

- Our work will be evidence-based, ensuring that our resources are used carefully, to best value for money, empowering those who need support the most.
- We will always try to do the right thing and strive to deliver the best work we can, operating with transparency and to high standards. We will do what we say we will do and be open and responsive to feedback.

## Outcome

Engage with Age recovers from the impact of Covid-19, consolidates its work and has capacity to extend its reach to empower older people to live happy, healthy, independent, and connected lives.

## Priorities for 2023-26

### People

- Support all staff to have a healthy work life that enables them to achieve the desired outcomes of Engage with Age and their own aspirations.
- Achieve a collaborative team working culture to ensure synergies across the organization are not missed.
- Manage the growth of our services with appropriate human resources.
- Increase the number of volunteers, and support and empower them.

## **Financial Resources, Physical Resources, and organisational capacity**

- Develop a more diverse and dependable income base.
- Maintain appropriate physical and digital resources.
- Increase our capacity to support the ongoing development of our services and provision.

## **Activities and methods**

- Review our activities; perhaps stopping some things and starting others, leaving some activities to others, all leading to better support for older people.

## **Communications**

- Review communications developments, including those stimulated during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and put in place the resources to achieve ongoing external and internal communications to achieve better outcomes for older people.

## **Impact measurement**

- Deliver a programme of ongoing evaluation to articulate the impact of our work effectively.
- Analyse and use the learning from our impact measurement to identify areas for improvement, growth and development.

## **Governance**

- Continue to comply with the requirements of the law and best practice.
- Develop and maintain an effective staff team and Board of Directors always complying with good governance practice.
- Continue to develop a proactive strategic approach to empowering older people.

# Glossary

*Loneliness: A subjective feeling of sadness or emotional pain caused by feeling alone or not having a much-wanted personal connection with another person such as with a partner or friends. Someone who feels lonely may have very few social connections, or they may have lots of social connections but still feel lonely and lack that important personal connection.*

*Isolation: An objective state of not having contact with others, friends, or society. Someone who is isolated may not necessarily feel lonely and may be content, though many isolated people also have an associated feeling of loneliness and may be cut off from important services or resources.*

*Reasonable adjustments: What Engage with Age does so that a person with a disability does not experience barriers to participation. This would include adjusting physical layouts or communications.*

*Under-represented groups: sections within the populations of older people who are currently under-represented within Engage with Age and/ or the wider older people's sector. This can include people living with disabilities, people from ethnic minority communities, or men (who are currently under-represented within EWA's participants).*

*Marginalised communities: Groups of people who experience exclusion and/ or discrimination for reasons that can include economic, social, political, or cultural factors.*

*Influencers and decision makers: People in a range of roles which can affect services or the perception of older people, such as elected representatives, advisors, researchers, journalists, community leaders and people on social media.*