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aspire

age
sector
platform

speaking from experience



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The Launch

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the first edition of 'aspire', Age Sector Platform's members' Newsletter. Congratulations to Ian Scott of the National Federation of Post Offices and BT Pensioners who was the winner of our 'Name the Newsletter' competition.



In the last year we have witnessed an unbelievable amount of change. A new organisation has formed, and with it, members of staff, a new name and logo, and a long list of campaign priorities. At this point I would like to thank The Atlantic Philanthropies for their support, without which, none of this would have been possible.

This members' newsletter will act as a great information tool for sharing details about Age Sector Platform activities, news, events and campaigns.

Inside this edition we look back at the successful events and campaigns Age Sector Platform has been involved in over the last six months. Also provided are details of some useful upcoming events, training and consultations which may be of interest to members.

I hope you enjoy!



Bill Carson

Age Sector Platform was officially launched on Monday 10 November 2008 in the Long Gallery at Stormont Buildings, with members, age sector representatives and politicians present on the day.

Chair of Age Sector Platform, Bill Carson, speaking at the launch, said: "This is a landmark day for older people in Northern Ireland. With around one third of

Northern Ireland's population over the age of fifty, the need for an older people's campaigning voice is obvious. Issues of concern to older people must be moved up the political agenda, to correspond with current demographic trends. Older people have a wealth of experience and expertise; Government and policy makers need to use this untapped potential."

Junior Ministers Gerry Kelly and Jeffrey Donaldson, who launched the organisation, congratulated all those involved with Age Sector Platform and highlighted the need for the organisation, in this era of extended lifetimes.

Junior Minister Donaldson commented: "As Ministers with special responsibility for older people we need to develop policies to deal with all those issues which are of most concern to them. Issues such as isolation, loneliness, and financial hardship to name just a few. By working closely with groups such as Age Sector Platform we can ensure that those who have contributed so much to our society can feel valued and respected."



Cover Photo:

Pictured at the launch of Age Sector Platform are L-R: Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson, Bill Carson and Phil Evans, Chair and Vice-Chair of Age Sector Platform and Junior Minister Gerry Kelly.

Photo: Joan Alexander

Junior Minister Kelly, speaking at the event, said: "As a society we must ensure older people are not excluded, disadvantaged or left vulnerable in anyway."

"We welcome the establishment of the Age Sector Platform and the work they will be doing to increase awareness of the issues faced by older people here. Older people have much to offer and we have much to learn from them. If we ignore this it will be a great loss to our communities and younger generations."

Several members of Age Sector Platform also spoke at the event. Francis Hughes, Anne Watson, Phil Evans, Michael Monaghan, Patricia Donald and Meg Holmes spoke with passion and enthusiasm of the need for Age Sector Platform and the one campaign issue that was most important to them.

Thank you to all those who attended the event. Your support was much appreciated.



Age Discrimination Seminar at Magee

The existence of age discrimination in Northern Ireland was the basis of a research seminar in the Magee campus of the University of Ulster in October 2008. The seminar, hosted by Age Sector Platform, presented research by Professor Brice Dickson and Lisa Glennon from School of Law, Queen's University, from their report entitled, 'Making older people equal: how to reform the law on access to services'.



Bill Carson, Chair of Age Sector Platform, welcomed older people from across the North West and those with an interest in the age sector to the seminar. He commented: "Our members have stated loud and clear that continuing age discrimination in 2008 is unacceptable. They have outlined the barriers they face in trying to get affordable car or travel insurance or access to health and social care that meets their needs. Therefore, I thank Brice and Lisa, on behalf of all the older people we represent, for the work and effort you have put into researching this issue."

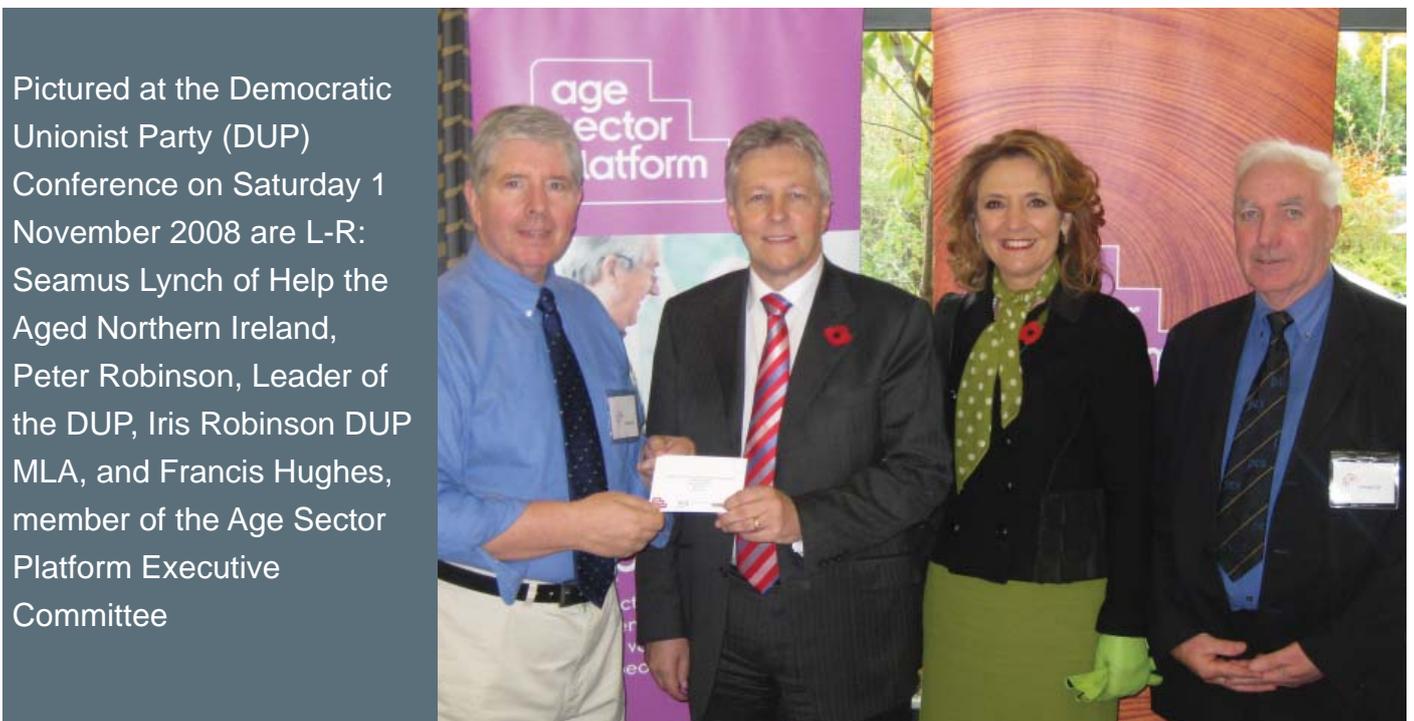
"The introduction of equality legislation in Northern Ireland, which features protection for older people in the provision of goods, facilities and services, is needed immediately. We urge the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to establish such legislation in Northern Ireland as an immediate action. Older people can no longer be treated like second class citizens."

For further information on age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services; one of Age Sector Platform's campaign priorities, visit www.agesectorplatform.org.

Political Party Conferences



Pictured at the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) Conference on Saturday 6 December 2008 are L-R: Bill Carson, Chair of Age Sector Platform, Reg Empey, Leader of the UUP, and Seamus Lynch of Help the Aged Northern Ireland



Pictured at the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) Conference on Saturday 1 November 2008 are L-R: Seamus Lynch of Help the Aged Northern Ireland, Peter Robinson, Leader of the DUP, Iris Robinson DUP MLA, and Francis Hughes, member of the Age Sector Platform Executive Committee

Age Sector Platform will also attend the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) Conference in January 2009 and the Sinn Fein Party Conference in March 2009.

The 'Can't Heat or Eat' Campaign

The 'Can't Heat or Eat' campaign, was launched by Age Sector Platform, Help the Aged and Age Concern NI, in October 2008 in response to the rising cost of living, and its affect on older people's lives. Pensioner inflation reached a high of 7.4% in August 2008, the highest rate for pensioners in 17 years!



Questionnaires and focus groups were conducted with older people's groups across Northern Ireland. This research confirmed that older people were indeed finding it hard to cope with the increased cost of living.

As part of the campaign, the following calls for action have been made:

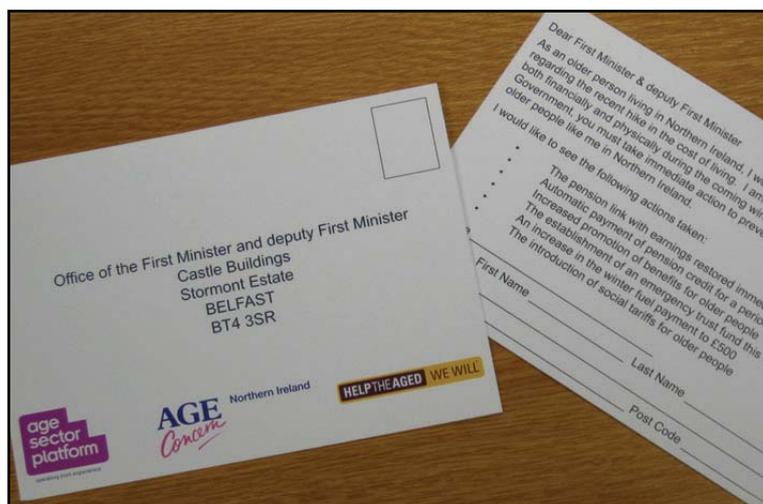
- Restore the earnings link for the state pension now, not in 2012
- Pay pension credit automatically for three months
- Set up an emergency trust fund for those in fuel poverty
- Increase the winter fuel payment to £500
- Debt and money management initiatives must be promoted and supported
- The introduction of social tariffs for older people

These calls for action were highlighted at the 'Can't Heat or Eat' rally, which took place outside Stormont Buildings on Monday 17 November 2008. Over 400 older people, including Age Sector Platform members, from across Northern Ireland gathered at the steps of Stormont to make their voices heard. A large group of political representatives were also in attendance on the day, with all parties supporting the demands being made. Sincere thanks to all Age Sector Platform members in attendance; it was a momentous day. Particular thanks to those involved in organising buses to the rally.



Add your voice to the campaign!

An on-going postcard campaign, which was launched in October 2008, is another medium through which you can support the calls for action proposed by the 'Can't Heat or Eat' campaign. The postcards feature the 'Can't Heat or Eat' calls for action, and are addressed to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.



If you would like some postcards to complete, please contact Alison McElhinney, Communications & Information Officer by phoning 028 9031 2089 or emailing alison.mcelhinney@agesectorplatform.org.

This campaign will continue over the winter months and we would appreciate the support of all Age Sector Platform members in re-inforcing the calls for action put forward by the campaign. Contact your local MLA's and newspapers telling them about the campaign, and your support for it!

Are you struggling to keep warm over the winter months?

Please consider calling the Winter Warmth Hotline for a practical information and signposting service.

The number is **0800 085 0185** and is open every Wednesday between 2pm and 4pm. Calls are free of charge.

Want more information?

Visit the 'Can't Heat or Eat' campaign website at: www.cantheatoret.org.uk

The website provides information about campaign activities and, if you are able, how to make a donation to the 'Can't Heat or Eat' campaign.

Member Spotlight

Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium



Phil Evans, Member

Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium was formed in 1996, to represent and support voluntary senior citizens groups across the district. Phil Evans, Vice Chair of Age Sector Platform, is one of Newry and Mourne's active members.

At present there are 1500 older people attending the 52 groups, made up of predominantly luncheon clubs but also social groups, church groups and leisure groups. The Consortium's role is to offer support directly to the groups in the form of weekly telephone contact, monthly mail shots and bi-annual visits. It also offers assistance with funding applications and organising exchanges as well as offering the opportunity to groups to attend a wide range of events.

The Senior Citizens Consortium has always been supported by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust both financially and in terms of representation on the Executive Committee. There are strong links between the two organisations and a service level agreement has been in place since 2003 clearly indicating the objectives for each year.

The Consortium is represented on a number of regional bodies such as Help the Aged's Senior Network, Age Concern NI, Age Sector Platform, Older Women's Network NI and the General Consumer Council. These links allow the Consortium to raise issues on a regional level and help in raising the profile of the senior citizens movement locally. Visits have been made to the World Conferences on Ageing in Madrid and Copenhagen in recent years to explore models of good practice across the world.

The Consortium has established strong cross border links with a number of agencies over the years with groups such as Ballyfermot Volunteer Centre and more recently with Cavan over 50s Forum.

Intergenerational work has always been a high priority and 2009 shall see 13 local older people team up with 26 first year students from St. Paul's High School, Bessbrook for a 4 year project looking at 'Our Lives – then and now'. The project will explore a number of themes such as school days, diet and play, finance and fashion.

Member Spotlight

Since its inception in 1996 the Consortium has supported the development of new groups as well as the development of three U3A groups in Newry, Crossmaglen and Kilkeel with a total membership of 350. These organisations promote life long learning and active citizenship, and allow members to choose from a wide range of activities which are all facilitated by members themselves.

The Consortium is a member of the local Community Safety Partnership and has received funding to design and distribute address books detailing contacts on relevant agencies to 3,000 older and vulnerable people across Newry and Mourne. A multi-agency steering group has been formed to progress this and other initiatives, known as Safer Newry and Mourne. This allows the sharing of information between agencies such as the local Health Trust, Fire and Rescue Service, PSNI, Victim Support and the District Council.

The Consortium has a strong lobbying role with representation from the Retired Members Association of the T&GWU on the Committee. The Consortium is affiliated to the Northern Ireland Pensioner's Convention and each year two delegates from the organisation attend the National Pensioner's Convention.



Anne Gallagher & Phil Evans, Newry & Mourne S.C. Consortium members at the 'Can't Heat or Eat' rally at Stormont

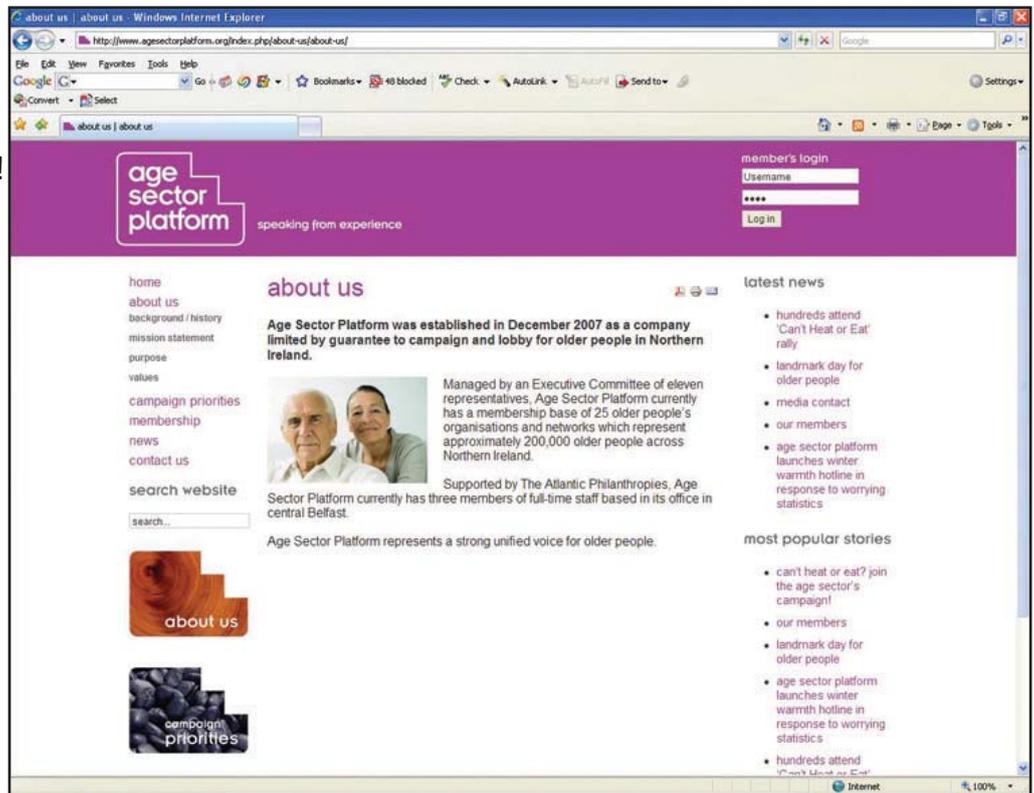
Consortium members have lobbied through Age Sector Platform on a number of issues such as free transport, free nursing and personal care and more recently lobbied against the introduction of water charges, the new property rates increase and on the increased cost of living.

Many thanks to Denise McBride, Development Worker at Newry & Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium for writing this article.

The Age Sector Platform Website

The Age Sector Platform website went live on Monday 10 November 2008, just in time for the launch of the organisation! The website is still in development with a few sections yet to be completed; however there is currently a lot of interesting content just waiting to be discovered!

The website will act as a great information sharing resource for members and interested parties, and with the homepage



featuring the most recent and interesting Age Sector Platform news story, as soon as you log on to the site, you'll be hooked!

Other menu options on the website include an 'about us' section, providing details about the purpose, values and history of Age Sector Platform in addition to information regarding the executive committee. The site also features an electronic version of our 'campaign priorities' for members' information and use. The news section of the website will allow visitors to view the most recent Age Sector Platform press releases, news stories and photographs.

An exciting feature of the website, which is still under construction, will be the members' login section. This section will be accessible to Age Sector Platform members only, and will feature message boards, polls and members only information. Watch out for upcoming information on this section!

Any comments or suggestions regarding the Age Sector Platform website can be made by emailing alison.mcelhinney@agesectorplatform.org. Log on to www.agesectorplatform.org today and have a look!

Big Lottery Funding

The Big Lottery Fund is currently consulting on what it should fund over the next few years, from 2009 to 2015. Since it launched in 2004 the fund has distributed over £2.7 billion to thousands of projects across the UK.

The 'Big Thinking' consultation wants the public to help shape its funding priorities so that it can make the biggest possible impact from the lottery money. This provides an opportunity for members of Age Sector Platform to promote the work that they are doing in the community and to encourage the Big Lottery Fund to help support organisations that are helping to improve the lives of older people.

The 'Big Thinking' website, www.big-thinking.org.uk, contains a range of features for you to get involved and have your say or you can contact their office on 0845 3 670 243 for more information. Their survey has ten general questions and then a number of Northern Ireland specific questions. Alternatively, if you would like more information contact Eddie or Alison at Age Sector Platform on 028 9031 2089. The consultation runs until Friday 27 February 2009.

Transport - Disability Discrimination

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has issued a consultation on proposals to update the Disability Discrimination Act.

At the moment transport buildings, such as stations and airports, have to meet certain standards under this law but the operators of transport services are exempt. This is an important change as currently disabled people have no rights against discrimination here when travelling on or using transport. Although aimed at people with disabilities, the changes can improve the quality of transport for many older people. The changes, when introduced, will bring us into line with Great Britain where these changes were introduced in December 2006.

Information on the consultation is available from the OFMDFM website, www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk, or you can request a consultation pack by phoning 028 90523149. The deadline for responses to the consultation is Friday 13 March 2009.

Caption Competition

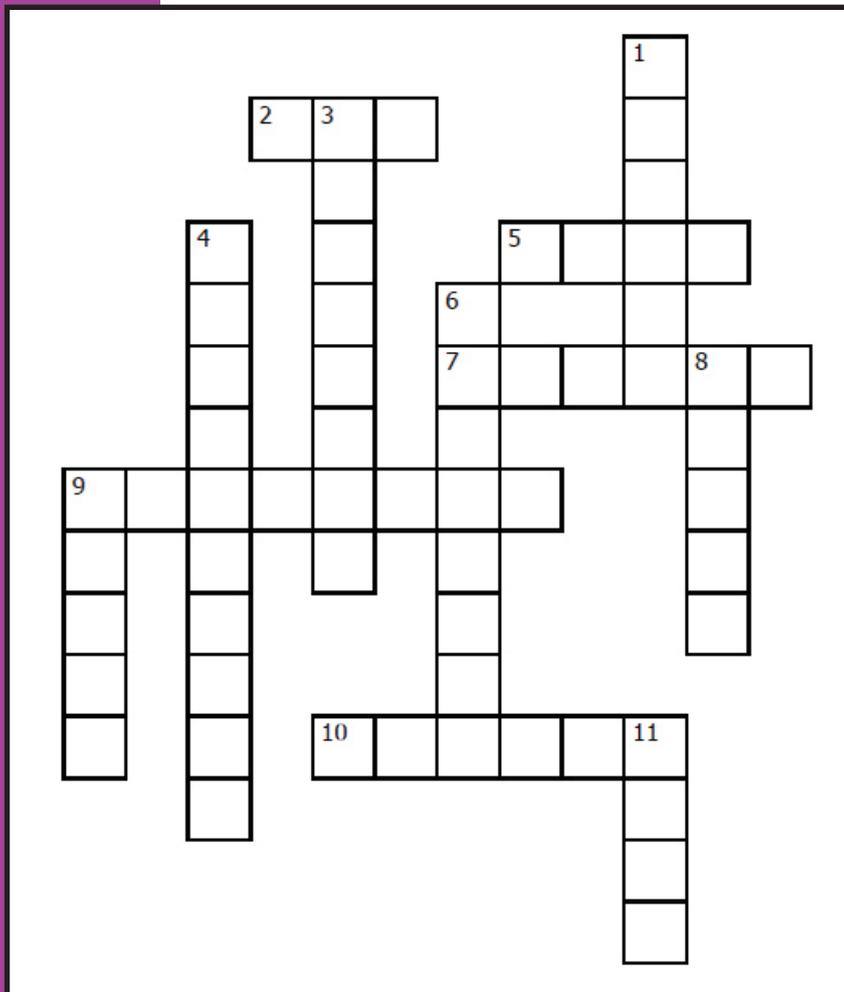
Age Sector Platform member June Mallon, jokes with leader of the SDLP, Mark Durkan, and leader of the UUP, Reg Empey, at the 'Can't Heat or Eat' rally at Stormont.

Can you guess what they were laughing about? The funniest and most creative caption will appear in the next edition of this newsletter.

Please send all entries to:
 Alison McElhinney
 Age Sector Platform
 Merrion Business Centre
 58 Howard Street
 Belfast, BT1 6PJ



Crossword



ACROSS

- 2 Cost of Living campaign slogan - Can't Heat or ?
- 5 The first name of the current Older People's Advocate
- 7 The NI Government department responsible for older people
- 9 Age Discrimination is still legal in the provision of goods, facilities and ?
- 10 The surname of Age Sector Platform's Chairperson

DOWN

- 1 The street on which the ASP office is located
- 3 ASP is funded by ? Philanthropies
- 4 ASP Strapline - Speaking from ?
- 6 The month in which ASP was officially launched
- 8 The age at which you become an 'older person' according to the UN
- 9 The age at which you qualify for a Translink buspass
- 11 The number of ASP campaign priority areas

ANSWERS AT BOTTOM OF PAGE 15

Julie Andrews turns 69!

To commemorate her 69th birthday, actress/vocalist, Julie Andrews made a special appearance at Manhattan's Radio City Music Hall for the benefit of the AARP. One of the musical numbers she performed was 'My Favourite Things' from the legendary movie 'The Sound Of Music', with a few lyrics changed!

My Favourite Things!

*Botox and nose drops and needles for knitting,
Walkers and handrails and new dental fittings,
Bundles of magazines tied up in string,
These are a few of my favourite things.*

*Cadillacs and cataracts, hearing aids and glasses,
Polident and Fixodent and false teeth in glasses,
Pacemakers, golf carts and porches with swings,
These are a few of my favourite things.*

*When the pipes leak, When the bones creak,
When the knees go bad,
I simply remember my favourite things,
And then I don't feel so bad.*

*Hot tea and crumpets and corn pads for bunions,
No spicy hot food or food cooked with onions,
Bathrobes and heating pads and hot meals they bring,
These are a few of my favourite things.*

*Back pain, confused brains and no need for sinnin',
Thin bones and fractures and hair that is thinnin',
And we won't mention our short shrunken frames,
When we remember our favourite things.*

*When the joints ache, When the hips break,
When the eyes grow dim,
Then I remember the great life I've had,
And then I don't feel so bad.*

Age Sector Platform Committees

The Executive Committee

Bill Carson (Chair), NIPSA Retired Members
Phil Evans (Vice-Chair), Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium
Michael Monaghan (Secretary), National Federation of Royal Mail & BT Pensioners
Olaf Hvattum (Treasurer), North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum
Elaine Campbell, Age Concern NI (Currently on Maternity Leave) - Replaced by Anne O'Reilly
Patricia Donald, Sperrin Lakeland Senior Citizens' Consortium
Margaret Galloway, ICTU Retired Workers
Meg Holmes MBE, GMB Retired Members
Francis Hughes, ICTU Retired Workers
Seamus Lynch, Help the Aged
Paddy Joe McClean, Civic Forum Representative

Transport Sub-committee

Francis Hughes (Chair), ICTU Retired Workers
Ivan Baxter, Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
Indira Laugee, Carers NI
Anne Watson, Newtownabbey S.C. Forum
Anne Gamble, Hey Day & Friendship Federation
Mary Morrison, Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum
James Watson, Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum

Health Sub-committee

Stephen Gourley (Chair), Engage with Age
Patricia Donald, Sperrin Lakeland S.C. Consortium
Mary Morrison, Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum
Indira Laugee, Carers NI
Anne Gallagher, Older Women's Network NI
Phil Evans, Newry and Mourne S.C. Consortium
Meg Holmes, GMB Retired Members

Sustainability Sub-committee

Anne Davey (Chair), PCS Retired Members
Paddy Joe McClean, Civic Forum Representative
Indira Laugee, Carers NI
Bill Somerset, NI Pensioners Convention
Nixon Armstrong, NIPSA RMG
Mary Morrison, Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum

Water Sub-committee

Michael Monaghan (Chair), National Federation of Post Offices & BT Pensioners
Bill Carson, NIPSA retired members
Olaf Hvattum, North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum
Seamus Lynch, Help the Aged
Anne O'Reilly, Age Concern NI
Patricia Donald, Sperrin Lakeland S.C. Consortium
Anne Gamble, Hey Day & Friendship Federation

Governance/Finance Sub-committee

Bill Carson (Chair), NIPSA retired members
Anne O'Reilly, Age Concern NI
Seamus Lynch, Help the Aged
Patricia Donald, Sperrin Lakeland S.C. Consortium
Olaf Hvattum, North Belfast S.C.Forum
Michael Monaghan, National Federation of Post Offices & BT Pensioners

Campaigns Sub-committee

Sam Caul (Chair), Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
Meg Holmes, GMB Retired Members
Seamus Lynch, Help the Aged
Anne O'Reilly, Age Concern NI

Interested in joining a sub-committee?

If you would like to become a member of any sub-committee, please register your interest with Eddie Lynch by emailing eddie.lynch@agesectorplatform.org or phoning 028 9031 2089.

Want to be a voice for older people?

Take part in Media Training!

Age Sector Platform has initiated a number of media training sessions for members, which will continue over the coming months.

These sessions will allow participants to gain and develop the skills and confidence necessary to deliver key campaign messages clearly, smartly and effectively, through the media. The sessions are both challenging and enjoyable, and will build the confidence of anyone who feels uncertain of their ability to become a spokesperson.

Sessions are organised on an on-going basis. For more information or to register your interest to attend one of the sessions, please contact Alison McElhinney, Communications & Information Officer, by emailing alison.mcelhinney@agesectorplatform.org or phoning 028 9031 2089.

Age Sector Platform Members

Age Concern, Northern Ireland
Amicus Retired Members
Association of Retired Persons over 50 (ARP/050)
AT&GWU Retired Members Association
Carers NI
Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum
Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA)
Communications Workers Union (NI Regional Retired Members)
East Belfast Seniors Forum
Engage with Age
GMB Retired Members
Help the Aged, Northern Ireland
Indian Community Centre 50+ Club
National Federation of Post Offices & BT Pensioners
Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium
Newtownabbey Senior Citizens' Forum
NIC ICTU Retired Workers Committee
North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum
Northern Ireland Pensioners Convention
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) Retired Members Association
Older Women's Network NI
Public Commercial Services Union (Associate and Retired Members)
Sperrin and Lakeland Senior Citizens' Consortium
University of the Third Age
West Belfast Senior Citizens' Forum

If you have any feedback or would like to request additional copies of this newsletter, please get in touch.



speaking from experience

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