

issue 6 • october 2010

aspire

age
sector
platform

speaking from experience



What lies ahead for pensioners?

Also inside this edition...

The Great Pensions
Debate

Age Awareness Week 2010
- 'Recognition'

Web Watch:
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U3A (NI)

Message from the Chair

Hello and welcome to the final edition of *aspire* during 2010! With such a busy year so far, and with no signs of slowing down, it will be 2011 before we know it!



This edition of *aspire* was published prior to the coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review, which is something occupying all our minds at the moment. Following 20 October, the NI Executive will then publish its draft budget. We must ensure that older people's services are not seen as a 'soft target' during these budget announcements.

As part of our 'Campaigning Matters' section, we review some of the pension reform announcements made over the summer months, whilst also providing an update on the progress of the legislation detailing the powers of the Older People's Commissioner.

This edition also features our AGM, the results of the 'Safety Matters' consultation event and the success of Age Awareness Week 2010 in addition to much more!

I hope you enjoy!



Bill Carson

Our Biggest AGM Ever!

Age Sector Platform's third Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place on Wednesday 23 June 2010 in the Holiday Inn, Belfast with over 120 people in attendance. Having moved to a bigger venue to accommodate the demand from the membership, we were delighted with the turn out.

Guest speaker at the AGM was Baroness May Blood MBE. Lady Blood, an active trade unionist during her working life, now uses her position in the House of Lords to speak up for working class people. At the AGM, Lady Blood spoke about her experiences as a passionate advocate for those living with the effects of poverty. She encouraged those present to make use of all twenty two Northern Ireland Peers at Westminster, emphasising that they possess power and influence which could be of use to a body representing the interests of older people. Lady Blood finished by commending the work of Age Sector Platform and offering her assistance during any future campaigning work.



As part of the AGM's proceedings, a 'Review of the Year' was presented to the membership by three highly involved members. The review highlighted three large areas of work that took place during 2009/2010. Michael Monaghan spoke about ASP's involvement in the creation of 'Safer Ageing' – a community safety strategy for older people. Francis Hughes discussed the organisation's on-going involvement in the 'We Agree' campaign for a powerful Older People's Commissioner. Finally, Ivan Baxter reviewed the Pensioners' Manifesto Campaign and Road Show during 2009/2010.

During the business section of the AGM, three members of the Executive Committee stepped down; namely Patricia Donald, Meg Holmes and Michael Monaghan. All three have provided invaluable service to the committee and played central roles in establishing Age Sector Platform. Three new members of the committee were proposed and approved by the membership – Nixon Armstrong (NIPSA Retired Members), William Devlin (U3A NI) and Victor Murphy (UNISON Retired Members).

One member, Anne Gallagher, must be praised for her creative input during the AGM. As part of the proceedings, Anne (from Bessbrook), recited her poem 'I, the Citizen', which was received with rapturous applause. The poem, which addresses the issue of older people and the value they contribute to society, has been praised far and wide since it appeared in the last issue of *aspire* and copies have been requested for use by other organisations such as the Equality Commission.



Over 120 people were in attendance at the AGM

Many thanks to those who spoke on the day and to everyone who attended the AGM.

Your interest in and dedication to Age Sector Platform is very much appreciated.

Our New Executive Committee Members



Nixon Armstrong



William Devlin



Victor Murphy

Older People believe ‘Safety Matters’

To get a better understanding of the community safety issues facing older people across Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Policing Board hosted a consultation event in partnership with Age Sector Platform during June 2010.

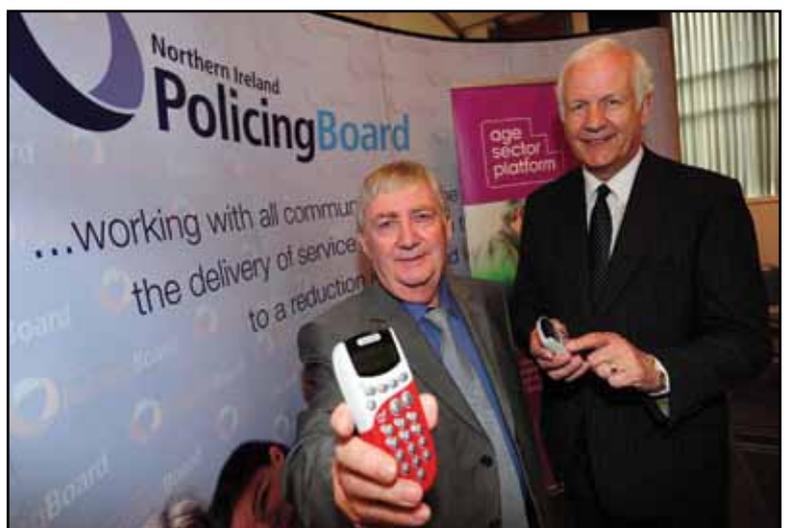
The event entitled ‘Safety Matters’ was well attended by over 70 older people representing a range of organisations and including members of the Board’s Older Person’s Reference Group, Age Sector Platform members and the PSNI’s Independent Advisory Groups.

Speaking after the event Brian Rea, Acting Chair of the Board said: “This consultation, which we hope will be an annual event, gave the Board and ASP a great opportunity to hear at first hand the issues causing older people the most concern in the areas where they live. Although crimes against this section of the community are a relatively rare occurrence in Northern Ireland, it is the fear of crime that can have the biggest impact on their day to day lives.”

“The event was also an opportunity for both organisations to identify key policing issues older people encounter in their communities which will help shape next year’s Northern Ireland Policing Plan, a target which was included in the ‘Safer Ageing’ Strategy launched last year by the then Northern Ireland Office (NIO).”

Commenting on the consultation event Bill Carson, Chair of ASP, said: “Age Sector Platform has always supported the older person’s right to live free from fear of crime within their home and community and today marks a major step forward in addressing this important issue.”

“We are delighted that the Board have actively sought to engage with the older population in Northern Ireland and we are pleased that the findings from this interactive event will eventually feed into the Northern Ireland Policing Plan.”



Policing Board Acting Chairman, Brian Rea and Chairperson of Age Sector Platform, Bill Carson pictured at the ‘Safety Matters’ event

Some Findings from the Event...

- 85% of those present had not been a victim of crime within the last year.
- However, nearly one-third (29%) were 'very concerned' or 'concerned' that they would become a victim of crime in the next year.
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those present, were not satisfied with the level of visible police patrols where they live.
- Nearly half (47%) of those present had contact with local police in the last year, with 57% stating that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their experience.
- Over two-thirds (70%) were not aware that a Neighbourhood Policing Team operated in their local area.
- 80% knew how to contact their local police.
- 9 out of every 10 people present (90%) had heard of the District Policing Partnerships (DPPs), although around the same percentage (92%) did not know who their local DPP members were.
- In addition, 86% said their local DPP had not consulted with their group in relation to local policing issues.
- Over two-thirds (70%) of those present were not confident that their local DPP was helping to address local issues.
- The three biggest policing issues highlighted by those present were:
 1. Anti-social behaviour
 2. Robbery
 3. Domestic Burglary & Theft
- The main activity those present believed police should be concentrating on to deal with local issues was 'Prompt Response to Emergencies'.

The above figures represent the views of those present at the 'Safety Matters' event. A report is currently being compiled by the NI Policing Board encompassing the above and findings from other consultative work during the year.

Age Awareness Week 2010

This year's Age Awareness Week took place between Saturday 25 September and Saturday 2 October. The week celebrated the diversity of older people's lives and highlighted the positive contribution older people make to our society. This year's theme of recognition aimed to challenge negative attitudes about older people's contribution to society, and how we recognise older people's skills, experiences and achievements.

Anne O'Reilly, Age Awareness Week spokesperson said: 'Northern Ireland is

an ageing society with more people over 60 than ever before. Older people are active citizens who play vital roles as carers, volunteers, and employees. Age Awareness Week 2010 has provided the perfect opportunity to recognise the important contribution older people make, and hopes to in turn transform negative attitudes and empower older people, creating a richer society for all.'

This year's launch event saw a 100-seater travelling cinema journey to a different town in Northern Ireland each day of Age Awareness Week. The 'Cinemobile' brought the magic of the movies and age issues to the doorstep of those involved, with daily screenings of the movies 'Up' and 'The Bucket List', in eight locations throughout Northern Ireland during Age Awareness Week.

Events throughout the week varied from Friendship Club open afternoons to networking seminars with colleagues with Age Platform Europe and everything in between. During the week, Age Sector Platform, and its members, were involved in many of the events taking place. Alison McElhinney (Communications & Information Officer) spoke at a CAP Showcase event in Cookstown on Friday 1 October, whilst Bill Carson (Chairman) and Eddie Lynch (Project Manager) travelled to Wales to

take part in the launch of the Welsh Senate for Older People. Bill Carson was asked to speak about his involvement in setting up Age Sector Platform in Northern Ireland.

For more information about Age Awareness Week 2010, visit www.ageawarenessweek.com.



Anne O'Reilly, and 'Volunteer Now' representatives Sean and Colette McCaffrey launch Age Awareness Week 2010



Recognising the Value of Older People

Older people have often been viewed as a 'burden' to society; with predictions made that by 2056 there will only be two working age individuals for every one person aged 65 and over. However, considered less frequently is the important contribution that older people make to our society; helping to save both the working population and the Government huge amounts of money. The economic value of older people is often ignored, whilst their 'cost' to society is regularly broadcast.

Consider this - unpaid work by older people including grand-parenting, caring for partners and volunteering is valued at £24.1 billion a year. Does that sound like a burdensome generation to you?

The value of grandparental childcare has been calculated at £3.9 billion a year; with 1 in 3 families and half of single parents depending on grandparents for childcare. This allows the parent/s to continue working, whilst avoiding expensive childcare costs. Grandparental childcare also benefits the Government, since less income support is needed for stay-at-home parents.

Care of sick or disabled adults is valued at a massive £15.2 billion a year . According to Carers UK, one in eight people aged over 60 is a carer; of which one in three care for 50 hours a week or more. Taking into account extreme savings being implemented in the NI Health Service, carers will no doubt become even more valuable in providing support for people to stay in their own homes.

The volunteering contribution of older people has been calculated at £5 billion a year . A 2009 report by the Volunteer Development Agency (VDA) found that one of the three main voluntary activities engaged in by older people included leading a group or being a member of a committee.

Many members of Age Sector Platform are closely involved in the running of an older people's group, forum or consortium, for which they are not compensated. However, the benefits that these groups provide in terms of the health and well-being of their members are invaluable. Many of these groups find it difficult to obtain funding to cover essential costs such as insurance or travel costs. More must be done to help support them to continue their good work. We must **recognise** their value!



ASP members, Anne Gallagher and Mary Ann Quigley, hard at work!

The Great Pensions Debate

One of the biggest challenges our modern society faces is how to provide for an ageing population. With pensioner poverty already widespread, Age Sector Platform believes that constructive discussion is needed on what measures will work now and in the future. This month, with the Coalition Government's spending review pending, older people from across Northern Ireland will gather at Stormont to examine and debate with politicians the recent announcements on pension reform and to ask one very important question – what does it all mean for us, and future generations?

'The Great Pensions Debate', which will be held in the Long Gallery, has been organised by Age Sector Platform in partnership with Age NI, ICTU (NIC) and National Pensioners' Convention (NI). The four organisations, which came together earlier this year as part of 'A Pensioners' Manifesto', view this event as a means of exploring the most important Westminster based issue for older people – the pension. The event will also examine the impact of revelations made over the summer months, such as the coalition government's 'triple lock guarantee', its consultation on scrapping the default retirement age and plans to increase the state retirement age. Following the event at Stormont, delegates from Age Sector Platform will travel to Westminster to take part in the national Lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 27 October 2010.



In June 2010, George Osborne announced that the coalition government would introduce a 'triple lock guarantee'. This means that the state pension will be increased in line with earnings, inflation or 2.5% (whichever is the greater) starting in April 2011. Age Sector Platform believes that this is totally insufficient, considering the fact that between 1979 and 2009 the state pension (as a percentage of average earnings) decreased from 23.3% to less than 14%. The value of the state pension has fallen significantly over the past few decades, and a dramatic increase is necessary. Pensioners in the UK have the fourth highest level of poverty in Europe; which demonstrates the need for more dedicated action.

Another issue which has arisen from June's emergency budget was the announced change in measuring inflation. The government's decision to link future increases in state, private and public occupational pensions with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), rather than the Retail Price Index (RPI), is predicted to have a detrimental effect on the level of pensions.

Mr Osborne also announced that VAT would be increased to 20% from January 2011. With nearly one in three pensioners (28%) already living in poverty in NI, this increase to the cost of living for older people could be catastrophic for those already struggling to make ends meet on limited incomes.



Plans to increase the state retirement age to 66 for men by as early as 2016; with further proposals that it should be raised to age 70 for both men and women during the next few decades must be considered seriously. As must proposals to axe the default retirement age of 65, the age at which employers can force staff to retire.

Age Sector Platform recognises the fact that every individual is different; and therefore this issue is all about choice. People should be able to work past the age of 65 if they want; whilst others who can not continue to work must be assured that retirement will not leave them in dire financial difficulties. We welcome the government's consultation on the abolition of the default retirement age. However, considering the unemployment figures released in August 2010 that reveal that the number of over 50's out of work in the last year had risen to a 10-year high, it will be of limited benefit. The abolition of the default retirement age will not be of help to anyone if there are not enough jobs available for people to work past the age of 65.

With the UK government's spending review expected this month, and the NI Assembly's draft budget to be announced soon after, it is vital that we ensure that older people are not seen as a soft target.

Did you know...

In a report entitled 'Time for Action' released in September 2010, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in Northern Ireland recommends:

"...that the Executive reviews its decisions on...concessionary transport fares", suggesting that the SmartPass should be "more effectively targeted".

The CBI in Northern Ireland, declined ASP's offer to meet and discuss this issue.

Final Stages to Establish a Commissioner



As we reach the final stages in developing the legislation for an Older People's Commissioner for Northern Ireland, 'We Agree' Project Leader Michele Smyth reflects on the past year of campaigning activity and looks forward optimistically to the passage of the legislation that will make it a reality.

The passage of the Bill for an Older People's Commissioner for Northern Ireland will not only represent a landmark piece of legislation for our Assembly, but will also deliver on a promise made by Ministers to older people over three years ago.

Since the announcement of the intention to put this post in place, there has been a high level of enthusiasm and interest and people of all ages have demonstrated their support for the 'We Agree' campaign. The people I talk to feel passionately that older people's issues need a specific focal point. This has never been more relevant, given the talk of imminent budget cuts.

Our population is ageing and steps need to be taken to ensure that older people are enabled to contribute as fully as possible for as long as possible and that they can feel assured that when support is needed, there will be appropriate services in place. The Commissioner will play a much needed role in helping to ensure that the best possible use is made of available resources and that the services Government provide, are relevant to addressing real need.

1st October 2009 not only marked International day for Older People but also the launch of the official consultation on the Older People's Commissioner. Consultation events across Northern Ireland were hosted by the interim Older People's Advocate, Dame Joan Harbison during November. The winter weather proved to be no deterrent with over 400 people attending. As well as the views expressed at these events, at the close of the consultation period in January 2010, over 80 written responses had been submitted, demonstrating widespread support for the Commissioner.

we agree

Northern Ireland needs a powerful Older People's Commissioner

As a result of the consultation, positive changes to the draft Bill were proposed and subsequently included. The Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 7th June 2010. Junior Minister Gerry Kelly acknowledged the 'We Agree' campaign in his introductory speech. It was rewarding for the older people in the public gallery who have been involved in the campaign to feel that they were being heard.



Older people demonstrate the Commissioner's value for money at the Bill's introduction to the Assembly

The Bill then passed to the Committee scrutiny stage. Evidence provided to the OFMdFM Committee during the scrutiny stage indicated several issues that a Commissioner with strong powers of investigation would be in a position to examine. Our existing Commissions and scrutiny bodies are unable to address these issues because they fall outside their priorities or remits.

The malnutrition of older people in hospitals has only recently come to light. Having an Older People's Commissioner will help to expose hidden issues affecting older people such as this. Underpinned by strong powers and with a unique focus on older people's interests, the Commission would be equipped to bring about positive change where it's needed most. This is what we continue to campaign for.

The Committee completed their clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill on Wednesday 15th September and on Wednesday 29th September their report on recommendations to the Assembly was agreed. We now await the final debates in the Assembly, which we expect to take place sometime in November 2010.

Whilst the progress of the Bill to date is encouraging, we are not resting on our laurels. The final stage of the process requires us to continue to be an influential voice in the debate and to extend this influence to reach all members of the Assembly. I'm always greatly encouraged by older people's willingness to get involved, so if you think you can help, please get in touch by phoning 028 9024 5729.

I look forward to the day when the Older People's Commissioner for Northern Ireland is in place to protect the rights and interests of older people. After all, ageing affects us all!

Member Spotlight

U3A - The University of the Third Age (NI)

U3A started in France in Toulouse in 1972 as L'Université du Troisième Age or UTA. From the start UTA was closely associated with French universities. The UK U3A was to choose a very different way of organising.

The three founders of U3A in the UK were Eric Midwinter, Michael Young and Peter Laslett all of whom were involved in education. The first U3A was established in Cambridge in 1982.



In 1990 the first U3A was established in Northern Ireland by Pascal MacDonald. It was Foyle U3A. Since then more U3As followed, and now there are 16 U3As throughout Northern Ireland, from Foyle and Causeway in the north to Newry and Crossmaglen in the south, Erne and Strabane in the west and Belfast and North Down and Ards in the east. In total we now have some 3,800 members, and U3As can have as many as 761 members or as few as 36. Size does not matter.

U3A's aims are:

- To encourage and enable older people no longer in full-time employment to help each other to share their knowledge, skills, interests and experience.
- To demonstrate the benefits and enjoyment to be gained and the new horizons to be discovered in learning throughout life.
- To celebrate the capabilities and potential of older people and their value to society.
- To make U3As accessible to all older people.
- To encourage the establishment of U3As in every part of the country where conditions are suitable and to support and collaborate with them.



Member Spotlight

U3A is different because:

- There is no curriculum – people learn what they wish.
- There are no entrance qualifications – a desire to learn is all that is needed.
- There are no exams or certificates – people enjoy their learning.
- There are no terms – U3A groups decide their own times to meet.
- There are no lecturers – people teach each other, and learn from each other.
- There is no campus – sometimes people use public buildings or a member's home.

Learning is interpreted in the broadest sense, subjects don't have to be academic – many groups enjoy physical activities.

Each U3A has its own 'management' committee who are responsible for setting the limit of the annual fee, organising a monthly meeting for members when there is usually a guest speaker, providing support for group leaders and generally looking after the business of running the organisation.

Each U3A will have a number of groups involved in activities such as art, walking, visiting gardens, cinema, computers, languages and much, much more. Each group will have one or two people, leaders, who will take responsibility for its activities, for example organising a visit to the theatre. But it is also the responsibility of all the members of a group to support the leader and help run the group.

Why do people join U3A? Because it can change lives – people find friendship, companionship, a chance to improve their skills and their mind, and above all it's great fun!

If you want more information about U3A in Northern Ireland go to www.niu3a.org.uk and follow the links to the different U3As.

Many thanks to Sandra Foster,
Secretary to the
Northern Ireland Region of U3A,
for submitting this article



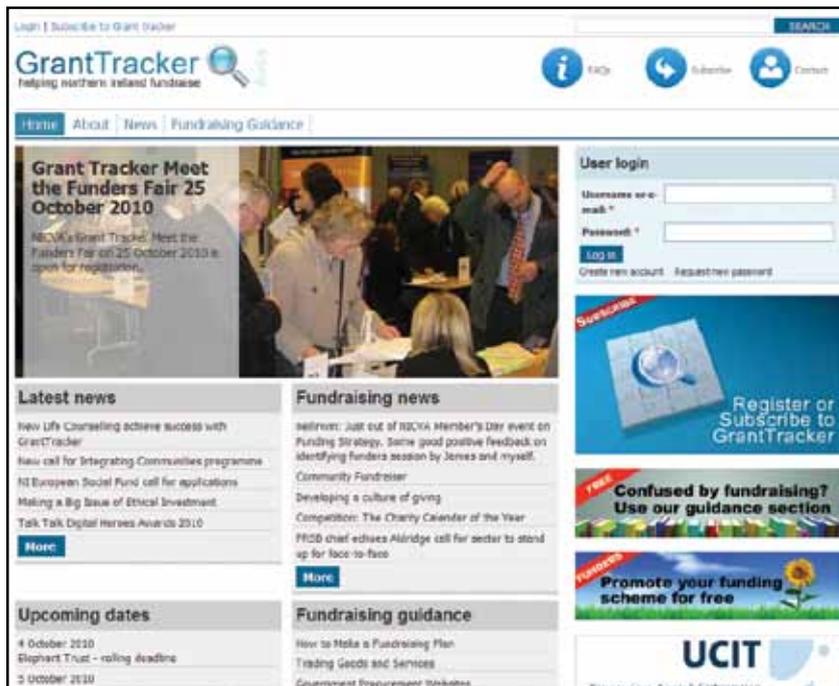
GrantTracker - the one stop fundraising resource

www.grant-tracker.org is the one must-have resource for fundraising in Northern Ireland, whether you are seeking to raise money for your local group or are a professional fundraiser. It provides information on researching and planning projects, identifying funding sources, making applications and establishing good practice, as well as the latest news, events and deadlines relevant to NI fundraising.

GrantTracker tracks down funding sources from corporates, independent trusts, international, European, local and central government, awards and lottery sources and currently contains 110 schemes specifically for voluntary and community groups engaged in voluntary activity in Northern Ireland.

MyTracker is a new feature on GrantTracker, enabling you to personalise the information you see, to create your own funding directory by tracking funding schemes or to have your own diary of deadlines. *DateTracker* is a new flexible tool for viewing a calendar of important dates such as application deadlines or funding scheme openings. *SuperTracker* is a more advanced feature that allows users to refine and filter funding types.

The free 'Fundraising Guidance' section is a library of information available without subscription. Additionally, the free *NewsTracker* service provides local, regional and national fundraising news. Current subscription rates are available on the website. Each subscription covers one organisational user, but additional users can be added for a little extra cost. To subscribe either register on the website or contact the GrantTracker Team. To contact the team for funding advice, telephone Neil Irwin or James Laverty on 028 9087 7777 or email neil.irwin@nicva.org or james.laverty@nicva.org.



All Age Sector Platform members can access the subscriber content of www.grant-tracker.org in the ASP Office

To make an appointment to browse GrantTracker contact Nichola Johnston on 028 9031 2089

A Survivor

By Doctor Rosaleen Rogers

Can you hear my gentle footsteps as I struggle in the snow?
Looking this way and that pondering which way to go
I am no longer blessed with youth as deep pain I try to hide
I do feel as good as the rest and I walk along with pride
Do you see me as not important? Perhaps I should sit against the wall
Abandoned, discarded and mortified
While you stand there so tall
I was that Doctor who supported those in need
Running the Medical room for the homeless
The hungry I did feed
Some were as young as nine and the public toilets were their home
I secured a roof over their heads
No longer did they roam
Do you see me as an outcast to be taunted and abused?
From you I demand respect
You ought to know I am not amused
I sat with the terminally ill easing their fears
Do you see that work as useless I was only a Volunteer
Do you see me as a burden as each new day unfolds?
Suggesting that I am unfit to hug or to hold
Do you see me as a lost cause where there is no cure
I do not agree with you and that I know for sure
It was I who gave so much to those who never earned
If you think I am still a victim
Life's lessons you will not have learned.

Please email info@agesectorplatform.org if you have something you would like to share through our Readers' Corner, or post your letter to the address on the back of this magazine.

Recipe for Apple and Cinnamon Scones

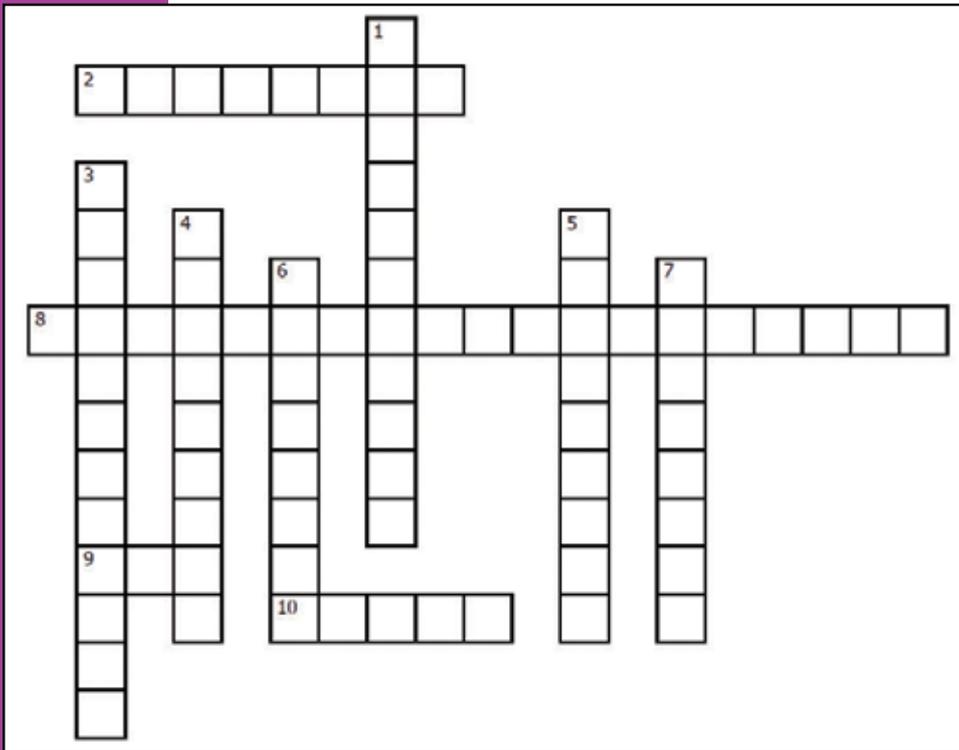
Ingredients:

1lb self-raising flour, 3oz butter, 3oz caster sugar, Pinch of salt, 1tbsp cinnamon (or to taste), 2 med sized Bramley apples, 8floz semi-skimmed milk,

Method:

- Rub butter into flour and add sugar, salt and cinnamon
- Quickly chop cooking apples finely and add to mixture
- Add milk
- Cut with medium cutter
- Bake at 200°C for 11-12mins.

Crossword



DOWN

- 1 Theme of Age Awareness Week 2010
- 3 Online resource for fundraising
- 4 No. of trade unions affiliated to the ICTU
- 5 Number of NI Peers
- 6 French town from which U3A originates
- 7 Guest Speaker at ASP's 3rd Annual General Meeting

ACROSS

- 2 Month that the final debates regarding the Commissioner are expected to take place in the Assembly
- 8 Top policing issue identified at 'Safety Matters' event
- 9 New measure of inflation announced in June's emergency budget
- 10 No. of events focusing on older people in NI Assembly during 2010

ANSWERS AT
BOTTOM OF
PAGE 19

Up for a Laugh?

Three sisters, aged 92, 94 and 96, live in a house together. One night the 96-year-old draws a bath. She puts her foot in and pauses. She yells to the other sisters, 'Was I getting in or out of the bath?'

The 94-year-old yells back, 'I don't know. I'll come up and see.' She starts up the stairs and pauses 'Was I going up the stairs or down?'

The 92-year-old is sitting at the kitchen table having tea listening to her sisters, she shakes her head and says, 'I sure hope I never get that forgetful, knock on wood.' She then yells, 'I'll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who's at the door.'

Three retirees, each with a hearing loss, were playing golf one fine day.

One remarked to the other, 'Windy, isn't it?'

'No,' the second man replied, 'it's Thursday.'

And the third man chimed in, 'So am I. Let's have a beer.'

Two elderly ladies had been friends for many decades. Over the years, they had shared all kinds of activities and adventures. Lately, their activities had been limited to meeting a few times a week to play cards.

One day, they were playing cards when one looked at the other and said, 'Now don't get mad at me...I know we've been friends for a long time, but I just can't think of your name! I've thought and thought, but I can't remember it. Please tell me what your name is.'

Her friend glared at her for at least three minutes she just stared and glared at her. Finally she said, 'How soon do you need to know?'

As a senior citizen was driving down the motorway, his mobile phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, 'John, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on the M1. Please be careful!'

'Heck,' said John, 'It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!'

Get Involved

Assembly Values Input from Older People

Written by the Northern Ireland Assembly

Making laws that improve life for everyone here is the primary job of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Northern Ireland's government consists of the Executive, with Ministers leading Government Departments and Members of the Assembly (MLAs) working in Assembly Committees who hold them to account.



Since the return of devolution in 2007, the Assembly has paid particular attention to the needs of older people

with the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister taking the lead.

Later this year, the Assembly will consider the Bill to establish an Older People's Commissioner. This Commissioner will ensure that older people's views are taken into account when legislation is being considered.

The Assembly is always keen to hear from groups interested in the issues affecting older people. Committee agendas are published on the Assembly's website on a weekly basis and the public are invited to attend. You can also write to Committee clerks to raise issues of concern or comment on any inquiries that are ongoing.

In addition, the Assembly and MLAs often sponsor events of interest to older people. By the end of 2010, there will have been eight events, focusing on older people. On 11 October 2010, Age Sector Platform will hold a debate on pensions, while in June of this year; Age NI briefed MLAs on the issues important to their members.

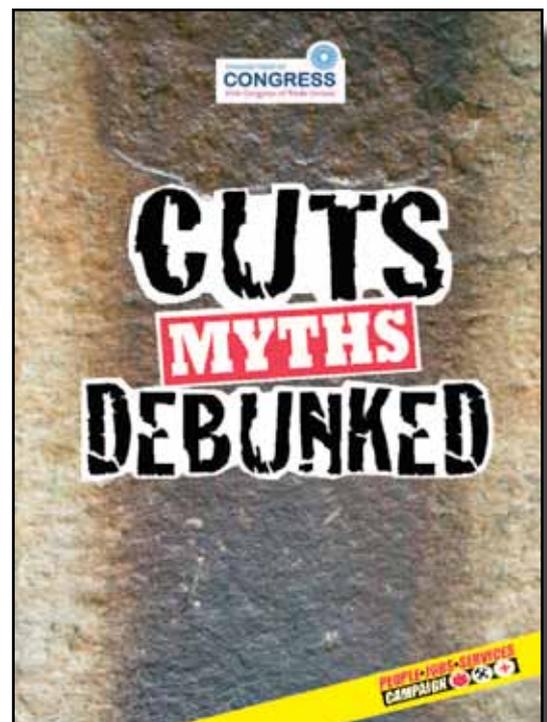
The Northern Ireland Assembly is your Assembly and you can get involved – contact your MLA, visit Parliament Buildings or contact our Committees. For more information, visit our website at www.niassembly.gov.uk, follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/niassembly or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NorthernIrelandAssembly.

ICTU Campaign Against Cuts

During September 2010, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions launched its campaign to prevent the UK government's planned cuts in public spending which it says will devastate the private and public sectors in Northern Ireland. A new publication entitled **Cuts Myths Debunked** was launched and will be distributed by the 36 trade unions affiliated to the ICTU, as well as by Trades Councils, community organisations and by street stalls.

The report tackles the various myths about the necessity to tackle the deficit in the lifetime of this parliament. It argues that:

- Government debt (70%) is not at record levels – it was 250% when they built the NHS
- The debt is manageable - the UK has 12 years to pay off its debts, longer than most advanced states, including the US
- UK's debt is lower than the Eurozone, Germany, Japan and the US
- Public spending is lower than comparable EU states
- UK public sector not big compared with OECD states
- Health costs are half those of the US
- Huge growth in inequalities since 1980.
- Top 10% have 100 times the spending power of bottom 10%
- Public sector is not too big, private sector is too small
- Private sector wages are low, not public sector too high
- Public spending maintains demand
- There are real alternatives to cuts
- Fairer taxes, all collected, not evaded or avoided.



The 20-page booklet was the first of a series of publications the trade unions have released over the last few weeks, ahead of the ETUC Day of Action across the EU on Wednesday 29 September. Another Belfast rally has also been organised for Saturday 23 October (three days after the Comprehensive Spending Review). For more information on the campaign, or to to obtain a copy of **Cuts Myths Debunked** visit www.ictuni.org or phone 028 9024 7940.

Crossword Answers:
DOWN: 1. Recognition 3. GrantTracker 4. Thirtysix 5. Twentytwo 6. Toulouse 7. MayBlood
ACROSS: 2. November 8. AntiSocialBehaviour 9. CPI 10. Eight

Age Sector Platform Members

Age NI
ALLY Foyle
Amicus Retired Members
AT&GWU Retired Members Association
Carers NI
Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum
Chinese Welfare Association
Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA)
Communications Workers Union (NI Regional Retired Members)
East Belfast Seniors Forum
Engage with Age
Friendship Federation
GMB Retired Members
Greater Shankill Senior Citizens' Forum
Indian Community Centre 50+ Club
NASUWT Retired Members Association
National Federation of Occupational Pensioners
National Pensioners Convention (NI)
Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium
Newtownabbey Senior Citizens' Forum
NIC ICTU Retired Workers Committee
North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) Retired Members Association
Older Women's Network NI
Pensioners Actively Lobbying Services (PALS)
Public Commercial Services Union (Associate and Retired Members)
Sperrin and Lakeland Senior Citizens' Consortium
UNISON Retired Members
University of the Third Age (NI)
West Belfast 50+ Forum

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



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