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age
sector
platform

speaking from experience

Pensioners Parliament hits the road again!



Also inside this edition...

Ivan's running for
Parliament!

Launch of
Quick Check 101

Platform responds to
Budget Briefing

Campaign to End
Loneliness in NI

Message from the Chair

Happy New Year to you all.

2018 promises to be an exciting year as we hit the road again for the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament. Find out more about our



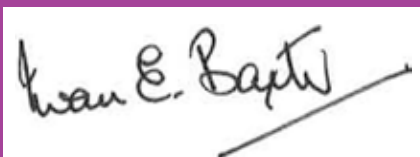
planned events between March and June on the following pages.

Between now and July I am hoping to raise some much needed funds for the Pensioners Parliament by taking part in a 10 mile race and I'd welcome your support, encouragement and sponsorship! Find out more on page 8.

You'll also find inside this edition, news of the relaunched Quick Check 101 service to tackle bogus callers, details of Age Sector Platform's responses to the Budget Briefing and Affordable Warmth consultation and details of a campaign to tackle loneliness in Northern Ireland.

Since our last edition we said goodbye to one of our staff members, Eleanor Mallon, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank her for everything she brought to the organisation - her commitment, creativity and friendly manner. Good luck in all you do Eleanor!

I hope you enjoy this edition!



Ivan Baxter

Attend your local Parliament!

This year's Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament will see local parliaments being held across the province between March and June.

Age Sector Platform aims to hold one parliament in every council area in Northern Ireland, which means eleven local parliaments will be held in total (subject to council support).

Each local parliament will run from 10.30am until 3.30pm, and will feature interactive voting, discussion and Q&A with an expert panel and a panel of local Councillors.

Registration for these events is so simple; just call the Age Sector Platform office on 028 9031 2089 to have your place confirmed today! You can also register online by visiting www.pensionersparliament.org.

The two-day Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament will take place in Autumn 2018, and as usual you must attend your local parliament in order to be eligible to attend this.

Once registered for your local parliament, please help spread the word among your friends/family or group members. Anyone aged 60 or over in Northern Ireland can attend their local parliament, but registration is essential as spaces are limited.

At the time of printing, Age Sector Platform can confirm seven out of the eleven parliaments and hopes to confirm the remaining four in the coming weeks.

If you are interested in attending a parliament in a council area that is unannounced at this stage, please contact Age Sector Platform on 028 9031 2089 to register your interest in hearing about your local parliament once confirmed. Alternatively, simply keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for announcements on these parliaments.



Launching the 2018 Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament
 Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland,
 and Ivan Baxter, Chairperson of Age Sector Platform

Seven confirmed local parliaments

| Council area | Date | Venue & location |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Belfast City | Friday 9 March 2018 | City Hall, Belfast |
| Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon | Tuesday 27 March 2018 | Craigavon Civic Centre, Craigavon |
| Ards & North Down | Tuesday 17 April 2018 | Marine Court Hotel, Bangor |
| Antrim & Newtownabbey | Friday 20 April 2018 | Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey |
| Fermanagh & Omagh | Friday 4 May 2018 | Westville Hotel, Enniskillen |
| Mid Ulster | Friday 11 May 2018 | Burnavon Centre, Cookstown |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | Friday 18 May 2018 | Canal Court Hotel, Newry |

Block bookings

If your group would like to block book spaces for a parliament, a booking sheet can be provided to collect individuals' details. Once this sheet is returned, Age Sector Platform will then confirm your block booking by phone or email. Download the block booking form via www.pensionersparliament.org or phone 028 9031 2089 to request one.

Christmas appeal – thank you!

In December 2017, Age Sector Platform launched its very first Pensioners Parliament Christmas Appeal to help fund its work during 2018, and a massive £840 was raised.

This money will be used to fund its work in:

- Defending the need for vital benefits like the bus pass
- Demonstrating how the health service should deliver better care for older people
- Campaigning for age discrimination legislation in NI that is long overdue
- Providing older people with advice on how to avoid being scammed

Ivan Baxter from Age Sector Platform commented:

“Since this is the first time we have run a Christmas Appeal, we weren’t sure what to expect, but the support has been brilliant. I would like to thank every single person who donated to the appeal and those who shared news of the appeal amongst their family and friends.”



“Most of you will be aware that Age Sector Platform’s funding situation isn’t as secure as it once was, and raising such a fantastic amount from our supporters really does show that this is an organisation people are invested in and want to exist for many years to come.”

If you missed out on supporting the Christmas appeal, don’t worry! You can, of course, donate at any time via www.justgiving.com/agesector or by posting a cheque to us. You can also find out about the next stage of Pensioners Parliament fundraising on page 8 and it involves Ivan Baxter and a pair of running shoes!

Training for members

During the last few months, Age Sector Platform has organised training for members with the aim of making the work of Campaign Committees even more effective. Members received training on social media, how to hold 'effective meetings' and how to have influence at UK Parliament.

Seamus Lynch from Age Sector Platform commented:

“It has been great to see committee members so enthusiastic about improving their capacity to influence and campaign. Various training options were offered to each committee member, and we hope to continue our training schedule during 2018.”



Anyone interested in joining a campaign committee during 2018, should contact Seamus Lynch by phoning 028 9031 2089 or emailing seamus.lynch@agesectorplatform.org.

Bogus caller? Phone 101 to Quick Check!

Quick Check 101, an initiative to help stop bogus callers, was re-launched recently by the Utility Regulator and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Under the scheme, residents can now phone 101, the police non-emergency number, to check the identity of callers to their home who claim to represent an energy or water network company.

The scheme is not only a collaboration between the PSNI and the Utility Regulator, but also includes all of Northern Ireland's energy and water network companies - firmus energy, NIE Networks, Northern Ireland Water, Phoenix Natural Gas and SGN Natural Gas. Supported by the Commissioner for Older People, the initiative is being re-launched in a bid to help people feel safer in their homes.



Superintendent Simon Walls, Jenny Pyper, Chief Executive, Utility Regulator and Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland pictured at the re-launch of the Quick Check Scheme

Jenny Pyper, Chief Executive of the Utility Regulator explained further: “Bogus callers are people who call at your house claiming to be from an organisation in order to trick their way into your home and steal from you. Although most people who call at your door are genuine, some are unfortunately not. As protecting the interests of consumers is at the heart of what we do, we wanted to enhance the good work already being carried out by the energy and water companies to tackle bogus callers.”

Superintendent Simon Walls from District Policing Command highlights the initiative: “The Quick Check scheme provides reassurance to members of the public about callers to their door claiming to be from network companies. Anyone who wishes to check the identity of someone who says they are calling on the pretext of inspecting gas, electricity or water supplies can now call the police non-emergency 101 number to verify their identity. Your call will be answered by a trained police

call handler who will take the details of the company which the caller claims to be working for. The call handler will then contact the utility supplier to determine whether the caller is genuine. I would encourage members of the public to follow our advice when dealing with unexpected visitors to their home.”

- Callers should always be asked for proof of identity. Genuine callers will be only too happy to provide this information and to wait outside the property until it is verified. No caller should be given access to the property until the householder is sure they are genuine.
- Never leave doors unlocked and do not to leave keys in an unsafe place (such as under doormats or flower pots)

Follow this advice when answering the door:

- Before answering the front door, make sure the back door is locked.
- If you have a door chain, remember to use it before opening the door. If not, we recommend you get one installed.
- Ask the caller for their identification and check it carefully.
- Ask them to wait outside and close the door - genuine callers will not mind.
- Ring Quick Check on 101. The call will be answered by a trained police call handler. They will check with the company that the person at the door is genuine. If they are not or they think that there is something suspicious, the operator will be able send the police to you.
- Do not let anyone into the property until you are satisfied as to who they are.

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, Eddie Lynch said: “From its conception, my office has been involved in the re-launch of the Quick Check scheme to include water, electricity and gas network companies, and I have been delighted to see the support they’ve shown for the scheme. This shows the commitment that exists to keeping older people safe, not just within the PSNI but across a range of sectors in our local community.”

Calls to the Quick Check 101 number from landlines or mobile phones cost 15 pence, regardless of the length of time you are on the phone or the time of the day you call. Members of the public should dial 028 9065 0222 if they are unable to dial 101.



Ivan's running for Parliament!

We have some exciting news to share...Ivan Baxter, Chairperson of Age Sector Platform, is running for parliament! Running for the Pensioners Parliament that is! In July 2018, Ivan will take part in a 10 mile race as part of the Portaferry Gala Festival to raise funds for the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament.

The Portaferry Gala Festival will take place this year between 14 and 21 July and the festival's 10 mile race usually attracts around 300 participants.



Ivan commented: "This race will be a serious challenge for me at 78 years old. I have always been a jogger but was never involved in organised runs until about seven years ago when I joined the NI Civil Service Athletic Club. Since then I have entered quite a few 10k runs, as well as joining in the Saturday morning Parkrun, usually at Victoria Park, as often as I can."

"I was very pleased to have been selected for the Northern Ireland Masters team last year and took part in the International Cross Country event held outside Derry/Londonderry on 18 November 2017, when our team won a Bronze Medal."

"My normal run is 10k, which is about 6 miles; so this run at the Portaferry Gala Festival will be a big challenge for me. Between now and July I hope to gradually increase the distances of my training runs, and will continue to compete in various organised 10k runs from time to time. I'm sure any money raised between now and July will be sure to keep me motivated!"

"I am fundraising for Age Sector Platform as it is an organisation which I have admired and supported for the last ten years, and which is now in need of additional funds to keep it, and the Pensioners Parliament, in existence. I feel that this type of sponsorship event gives all our supporters the chance to contribute to the upkeep of the organisation, and I hope that you will be generous in your giving!"

How you can support Ivan's fundraising efforts:

- Request or download a sponsorship form from Age Sector Platform, and invite donations from your family, friends and/or group members
- Share news of Ivan's fundraiser via Facebook, Twitter or any websites/newsletters you manage
- If you host meetings of an older people's group, add Ivan's fundraiser to the agenda for your next meeting
- Donate via www.justgiving.com/agesector
- Not online? Send a cheque and make it payable to 'Age Sector Platform'

Right:

Ivan running as part of the Northern Ireland Masters team just outside Derry/Londonderry in 2017



Left:

Ivan running as part of the Age Sector Platform relay team in the Belfast Marathon in 2013



Platform responds to Budget Briefing

In December 2017, the Department of Finance published a budget briefing document which set out a number of scenarios, and suggested methods of generating income. Its purpose was to illustrate the choices that will need to be considered by Ministers in reaching agreement on a Budget, and Age Sector Platform provided feedback to the document.

Below you can read just some of our comments on the suggested proposals, contained in the briefing. Read our full response to the Department of Finance on our website www.agesectorplatform.org. Simply go to 'campaigns' on the main menu, and then click on 'consultations'.



Linking eligibility for Smartpass with State Pension Age

There has been some discussion in recent times regarding the 60-64 Smartpass and its use by people travelling to work. An article from the NI Assembly's Research & Information Service in December 2017 concluded: "evidence does not suggest Smartpasses are being widely used for commuting purposes." It also noted that "the majority of use (84%) occurs outside peak hours for activities such as shopping, social and recreation activities, and health appointments - activities which clearly align with the scheme's objectives.

The Campaign to End Loneliness asserts that loneliness and social isolation is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day; therefore the social and health benefits of the Smartpass must not be under-estimated.

Our Smartpass research [in 2015] revealed that almost half (45%) of older people said they could not afford to do all of the things they do now if they didn't have their Smartpass.

Introducing prescription charges

During 2014/15, Age Sector Platform collected more than 20,000 signatures in support of the 'Hands Off' campaign, defending the need for universal pensioner benefits including prescription charges. This sends a clear message to policy makers - older people should not be penalised for poor health. Older people typically require more medicines than most to maintain a good quality of life and should not be penalised because of their circumstances.

During January 2018, Age Sector Platform conducted a survey with older people aged 50+ on some of the Department's budget briefing proposals. The survey collected 444 responses from older people across Northern Ireland, and revealed that the vast majority of older people still believe they should be exempt from prescription charges - four out of five (79%) agreeing with this position.

Charging for domiciliary care

During January 2018, Age Sector Platform conducted a survey with older people aged 50+ on some of the Department's budget briefing proposals. The survey revealed that three in five (59%) did not agree with people in receipt of domiciliary care having to pay towards its cost.

The 'Briefing on Northern Ireland Budgetary Outlook 2018-20' mentions an estimated income of £11.3m - £22.5m, and from our understanding this is based on every person receiving domiciliary care paying 5% or 10% towards the cost of their care. This would mean an annual bill of approximately £487 or £970 for many older people already struggling to make ends meet.

As part of our Budget Survey, we put forward a number of different payment scenarios including no-one paying, a voluntary payment and a mandatory 5% or 10% payment. One thing is clear – there is no overwhelming support for any system of payment.

Changing criteria for non-emergency patient transport

In October 2016, Age Sector Platform conducted research into older people's experiences of travelling to hospital appointments. Almost half (45%) of respondents said they experienced difficulty in travelling to hospital appointments within the last two years. It is clear from our research that transport to hospital is already a problem for many older people in Northern Ireland, and limiting the resources for the non-emergency patient transport scheme would undoubtedly impact on attendance rates at hospital appointments. These missed appointments will cost the health service money and will also impact on the individual's health and wellbeing, which will in itself cost more money to the health service in the longer term.

Campaigning Matters

Proposed changes to Affordable Warmth

In November 2017, the Department for Communities launched a public consultation on proposed changes to the Affordable Warmth Scheme, and Age Sector Platform has examined the potential impact these changes may have on older people.

The Affordable Warmth Scheme is the Department's main programme for tackling the effects of fuel poverty in vulnerable low income households in Northern Ireland. It is a targeted scheme which provides energy efficiency measures to eligible households in order to mitigate the effects of fuel poverty.



Following on from a review of the scheme after one full year of operation, several proposals for change were identified and set out in the consultation document for comment.

The four proposals were:

1. that one installer managing the installation of all measures to the household is the preferred delivery method;
2. raising the income threshold to £23,000 for households with more than one adult and reducing it to £18,000 for all single person households;
3. that Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Carer's Allowance are not included in the calculation of income for the Affordable Warmth Scheme; and
4. the removal of the additional boiler replacement criteria of a member of the household being over 65 or having a child under 16 years of age, or being in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.

Age Sector Platform has welcomed the move to exclude benefits like Disability Living Allowance and Carer's Allowance from the calculation of income. Including these benefits in the income calculation previously would have stopped many older carers and those living with a disability from qualifying for the scheme.

Campaigning Matters

Older people availing of the Affordable Warmth Scheme should expect an efficient service and a stress-free journey from application to completion. Age Sector Platform has therefore called for each applicant to be assigned one key contact for queries and concerns throughout the process. This person should manage the installation of all measures for the household, ensuring all work is completed efficiently and within a target timescale.

The Platform has challenged the proposed reduction to the income threshold for single person households. This change would be sure to exclude many older people living alone from benefitting from the scheme, and actually conflicts with government policy in other areas where additional assistance is provided to older people living alone, such as Lone Pensioner Allowance.

The removal of age-related and disability-related eligibility for the boiler replacement element of the scheme is to be supported. Someone aged 50 or 60 with an inefficient boiler should not be excluded simply because they haven't reached their 65th birthday yet. However, there is evidence to suggest that the old, young and disabled are impacted by a cold home more than others - in terms of their health and wellbeing. Age Sector Platform has therefore suggested that some form of prioritisation needs to exist so that the scheme's limited resources can be allocated in a logical manner.



You can read Age Sector Platform's full response on our website www.agesectorplatform.org. Simply go to 'campaigns' on the main menu, and then click on 'consultations'.

Member Spotlight

UNITE Retired Members

UNITE the Union was formed in May 2007 by a merger of Amicus and the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), with a retired members' branch structure also being established.

A retired members section of the TGWU was the vision of Jack Jones (29 March 1913 – 21 April 2009) who was General Secretary between 1968 and 1978. Although an informal retired members section was eventually set up, it sat outside the rules and structure of the TGWU under a voluntary arrangement. Upon retirement, Jones served as President of the National Pensioners Convention, an umbrella organisation representing over 1,000 local, regional and national pensioners' groups.

Jones' vision was fully realised when UNITE was formed in 2007, with a retired members Branch structure being established with regional / national committees and its own conferences and annual summer schools.

Since its formation UNITE Retired Members (URM) has been heavily involved in all social and economic campaigns organised by the Union and indeed, the TUC and the ICTU. Using its campaigning and negotiating experience as trade unionists; URM has been at the forefront of opposing poverty, unemployment, the privatisation of public services and campaigning for jobs investment in both the public and private sector.

URM members were involved in organising protests in Ballymena where 860 workers in Michelin and another 1,000 jobs were lost with the shifting of JTI tobacco to Eastern Europe. At the same time URM organised protests outside local hospitals, health and community centres against privatisation and closures.



UNITE Retired Members pictured with Eamonn Donaghy, Chief Executive of Age Sector Platform and Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People NI, at the URM Dignity Day event in 2017

UNITE Retired Members is an active member of Age Sector Platform, and has strongly supported its campaign to extend the Warm Home Discount Scheme to Northern Ireland. At present, the scheme is not applicable in Northern Ireland, despite pensioners in England, Scotland and Wales receiving £140

Member Spotlight

per year towards their energy bills. The formal Government response being: “The Warm Home Discount scheme does not apply in Northern Ireland as the primary legislation for the scheme only extends to Great Britain. Fuel poverty is a devolved matter and therefore it is for the Northern Ireland Executive to decide its own fuel poverty objectives and policies.”

The URM sees this as discrimination. The rate of fuel poverty is higher in Northern Ireland than in any other part of the UK, standing at 42% or 294,000 homes, with the figure rising to 62% for older people and on this basis, have succeeded in receiving the support of Northern Ireland MPs. At the same time the URM has raised this question of discrimination at the forthcoming UNITE policy conference, so that Age Sector Platform’s position is accepted as UNITE / ICTU policy.

More older people are living in poverty in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in the UK. A total of 23% of elderly people in Northern Ireland are living in poverty, an increase of 2% on last year’s figures, compared to 16% across the rest of the UK. By 2030 more than a quarter of the population will be aged over 60.

Recognising the need for a united strong voice, from its formation the URM has been an active member of Age Sector Platform. Four URM members sit on Age Sector Platform’s Plenary Group – Brenda Irvine, Jimmy Nixon, Joe Mathews and Hugh Rafferty. Hugh Rafferty also sits on Age Sector Platform’s Board, along with Brenda Irvine, Regional Chair of the URM, who is Secretary of Age Sector Platform. Numerous URM members have attended the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament since its establishment in 2011.

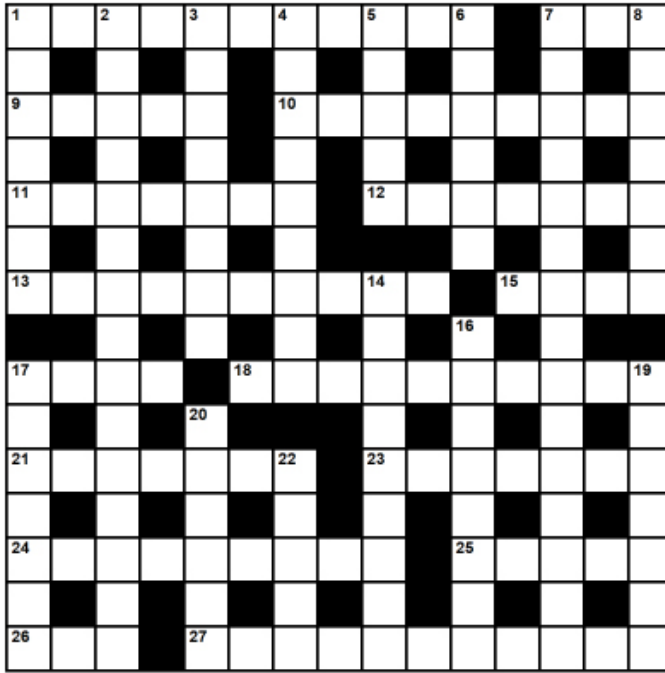
UNITE Retired Members is also heavily involved with the National Pensioners Convention, with delegates sitting on the Regional National Pensioners conference and delegates attending the annual NPC Pensioners’ Parliament each year. URM also sends delegates to the NPC National Committee and the NPC Executive.

For more information on UNITE Retired Members, phone 028 9023 2381 or visit its web page at www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/retired-members/.



Brenda Irvine, Regional Chair of UNITE Retired Members and Age Sector Platform Secretary, speaking at NI Pensioners Parliament

Cryptic Crossword



Down

1. A cattle-herder or cowboy in the steppes of western Venezuela and eastern Colombia (7)
2. Actor who played the title role in the 1990 film *Cyrano de Bergerac* (6,9)
3. Steve ____, the Sports Personality of the Year in 2000 (8)
4. A hurtling mass of snow, with ice and rock, descending a mountainside (9)
5. John Millington ____, Irish writer who wrote the play *The Playboy of the Western World*, first performed in 1907 (5)
6. Italian town where St Francis founded the Franciscan religious order in 1209 (6)
7. Striker for Tottenham Hotspur in the 1990s who later managed Germany's national football team (6,9)
8. ____ Knowles, former member of the girl group *Destiny's Child*, who married rapper Jay-Z in 2008 (7)
14. Plant with thin green edible shoots, whose first pickings are known as sprue (9)
16. African country whose largest natural reserve is Hwange National Park (8)

17. Obsolete monetary unit of Germany, worth one-hundredth of a mark (7)
19. An intricate decorative fret pattern, especially in ancient Greek architecture (7)
20. A tropical Indian fig tree with vast rooting branches (6)
22. A brownish-grey colour, the French word for 'mole' (5)

Across

1. An arm of the Mediterranean between northwest Italy and Corsica (8,3)
7. A triangular sail stretched in front of the foremast in a ship (3)
9. Pungent, biting, caustic (5)
10. Novel first published in 1847, written under the pen name of Acton Bell (5,4)
11. Suburb of Stoke-on-Trent, named after the Classical region, the site of Josiah Wedgwood's residential Hall (7)
12. Great ____, iron steamship designed by Brunel, the largest ship ever built when launched in 1858 (7)
13. Geological period between the Cambrian and Silurian eras (10)
15. Island in the Inner Hebrides of Scotland, whose largest settlement is Portree (4)
17. Alexander ____, English author who wrote *Ode on Solitude* when aged twelve (4)
18. Garden plant of the buttercup family, with tall showy spikes of blue flowers (10)
21. Amelia ____, the first woman to fly solo non-stop across the Atlantic Ocean (7)
23. The coffee bean produced from the shrub *Coffea canephora*, grown especially in East Africa (7)
24. Canadian musician who recorded the 1970 album *After the Gold Rush* (4,5)
25. Mary ____, historian who wrote the book *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up* (5)
26. Large horned antelope with a tufted tail, also called the wildebeest (3)
27. A white Rhine wine produced near Mainz, Germany (11)

Goodbye Eleanor!



Age Sector Platform's Communications Officer, Eleanor Mallon, left the charity at the end of 2017, and we'd like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work over six years with the charity.

Eleanor is enjoying life in Australia at the moment, and we wish her all the best in the future. Good luck Eleanor!

Sudoku

(difficulty level: medium)

Use logic to complete this 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, row and 3x3 section contain the numbers between 1 to 9.

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| | 1 | 5 | 7 | 4 | | 2 | | |
| | | 7 | 1 | | | | | |
| 6 | | 9 | | 2 | | 4 | | |
| | | | 5 | | 1 | | | |
| | | | | | | 7 | | 6 |
| | 5 | | | 9 | | | | 8 |
| | | 6 | | | | 9 | | |
| | | 4 | | | | | | |
| | 9 | | | | 2 | | | 8 |

Up for a laugh?

My 60-year-old mother-in-law, completing two years of wearing orthodontic braces, was in the office having them adjusted. As she sat in one of the waiting-room chairs, the teenager next to her looked at my mother-in-law in astonishment. “Wow,” he said. “How long have you been coming here?”

At his 103rd birthday party, my grandfather was asked if he thought that he’d be around for his 104th.

“I certainly do,” he replied. “Statistics show that very few people die between the ages of 103 and 104.”

My husband was bending over to tie our grandson’s shoes, when I noticed the little boy staring at his grandfather’s head. He gently touched the slightly thinning spot of hair and said in a concerned voice, “Grandad, you have a hole in your head. Does it hurt?” After a pause, I heard my husband’s murmured reply: “Not physically.”

Solutions

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 7 |
| 8 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 5 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 4 |
| 7 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 8 |
| 9 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 2 |
| 6 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 1 |
| 2 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 5 |
| 3 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 9 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| L | I | G | U | R | I | A | N | S | E | A | J | I | B |
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| P | O | P | E | D | E | L | P | H | I | N | I | U | M |
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Campaigning Matters

Campaign to End Loneliness in Northern Ireland

“Loneliness can be paralysing. It’s suffocating. And it’s so hard to see the way out.”

These are the words of Barry, an 85 year-old ambassador for the Campaign to End Loneliness. He was married to his wife Christine for 44 years. Her sudden death left him heartbroken, grieving – and grappling with deep loneliness.

Loneliness affects everyone differently. It’s something that can creep up on you for many reasons, but some common experiences of older age could make you more likely to experience loneliness. These include bereavement, ill health, becoming a carer or giving up driving.



Chronic loneliness is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and worse than being obese. Lonely people are more likely to develop depression, dementia and heart disease.

Loneliness is an epidemic. There are 1.2m chronically lonely older people around the UK. Half a million older people go at least five or six days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone at all. The stigma of loneliness is a major problem too. In fact, three-quarters of older people will not admit to feeling lonely for fear of being a burden. Most worrying, however, is that 9 in 10 people believe loneliness in older age is now more likely – that loneliness is inevitable.

The Campaign to End Loneliness is here to challenge that. Loneliness is not inevitable if we all play our part to tackle it. We believe that nobody who wants company should be without it. We have

Campaigning Matters

been holding community conversations, building connections, researching and campaigning to make this a reality.

The Campaign to End Loneliness has a dedicated Campaign Manager in NI. We will break down the stigma of loneliness together, from businesses to government, from charities to professionals, everyone can take action.

The need for friendship and support does not reduce with age. As Barry Ward says, "Whether we're 24 or 84, we all need connections that matter." It's time for us to all take action and connect with the thousands of lonely older people in our communities.

The UK Government has recently appointed a new Loneliness Minister, Tracey Crouch. The Campaign will work closely with her to make sure loneliness is a national priority and with devolved governments and services to do the same. We want 2018 to be the year that everyone takes action on loneliness. But we need your help.

We are looking for older people to become involved in the Campaign by sharing their stories, thoughts and ideas on how to tackle loneliness. If interested, please get in touch.

Email: fiona.murphy@campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk
Visit www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk
for further information.



Age Sector Platform Members

ABC Seniors Network
Age NI
Age North Down and Ards Over 50s Forum
ALLY Foyle
Belfast East Seniors Forum
Carers NI
Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum
Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA)
COAST (Causeway Older Active Strategic Team)
Communications Workers Union (NI Regional Retired Members)
Engage with Age
GMB Retired Members
Greater Shankill Senior Citizens' Forum
Hoi Sum Chinese Elderly Group
ICTU Retired Workers Committee (NI)
Indian Senior Citizens Club
Mid and East Antrim AgeWell Partnership
Mid Ulster Seniors Network
NASUWT Retired Members Association
National Federation of Occupational Pensioners
National Pensioners Convention (NI)
Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium
Newtownabbey Senior Citizens' Forum
NIPSA Retired Members Association
North Belfast Senior Citizens' Forum
North West Ageing Well Together (NVAWT)
Older Women's Network NI
Public Commercial Services Union (Associate and Retired Members)
Retired Teachers' Association Northern Ireland
South Belfast Lifestyle Forum
South West Age Partnership
UNISON Retired Members
Unite Retired Members
West Belfast 50+ Forum

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