

South Derry Cultural and Heritage Society.

The South Derry Cultural and Heritage Society continues to provide an invaluable resource for local communities and organisations who use our facilities to organise events and arrange programmes which celebrate the rich cultural, linguistic, and historical heritage of the area.

Weekly adult Irish Language classes were held from January to March, September to December. We realigned our classes post pandemic, as we discovered coming out of it, more people were inclined to prefer outside activities in the Spring & Summer months, and we experienced dropoff in attendance.

Our classes continue to include periodic talks on local history, which covered the decade of centenary events being held more widely across our area, along with lore and place names. Irish dancing classes continued throughout the year on a weekly basis; held on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings.

In July an Irish dancing summer scheme, continues to attract a huge number of participants. Many pupils from the school of dancing continue to earn provincial and national recognition for their dancing and South Derry Cultural and Heritage Society are rightly proud of the role we play through the provision of facilities for this group.

We strive to promote a sense of well-being and inclusivity within our community structure by providing activities which are accessible to people with limited mobility. The group has identified a requirement to cater for those within our area who suffer from mental health issues. To meet this need, the group organises recreational activities linked to health and wellbeing such as yoga, flower arranging, meditation, reflexology and counselling services. All these activities work to empower and educate our community, with particular reference to mental health. These are vital in an area which has suffered due to the conflict and we have become ever more aware of the nature of transgenerational trauma.

SDCHS uses a community development approach which links local communities with cultural and heritage initiatives. We organised workshops on Irish language, cultural archaeology, local oral traditions and living heritage. We continue to provide and/or secure the provision of social services and practical assistance for families within the area of benefit to include particularly, but not exclusively, around the needs and experiences of ex-prisoners and their families. This includes access to advice services and providing access to programmes which impact particularly on health to include such as Fuel Poverty, Warm Homes, benefit uptake, wellbeing and welfare programmes.

SDCHS aims to ensure that all residents in the local community have a voice. SDCHS has positively impacted locally by bringing people together, helping people of all ages to live happy and healthy lives.

The SDCHS will continue to organise, facilitate and support successful initiatives, and this demonstrates the role this organisation plays in building community cohesion by continuing to organise community events and remaining relevant within the area of uptake. And our provision of services, classes and recreational activities will continue to develop as we move away from the pandemic which has a significant impact upon our members and users and has forced us to consider how we continue to provide for our base.